

The Muslim Sunrise



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**METAPHORIC
LIGHT**

**LITERAL
DARKNESS**

**CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND
MODERN SCHOLARSHIP**

By Anwer Mahmood Khan

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The Muslim Sunrise

A Journal of the Islamic Renaissance in America

The Muslim Sunrise is a journal of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc., U.S.A. The magazine is open for discussions on Islam and topics relating to other religions. It highlights the role of Islam in a changing environment. It provides a platform for public opinion on current issues and their solutions. Opinions expressed in the magazine may not necessarily be those of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was founded in 1889 by *Hadrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1908), peace be on him. It is presently headed by *Hadrat* Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the fifth successor to the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, may Allah be his support.

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In This Issue

**METAPHORIC LIGHT
LITERAL DARKNESS**

By Anwer Khan

Foreword—5

Introduction—7

Apostle's Creed—10

Jesus as Son of God—12

The Concept of Original Sin —23

The Crucifixion of Jesus—32

Additional Evidence Discovered—59

Jesus' Resurrection—70

Jesus' Ascension to Heaven —78

Conclusion—83

Selected Bibliography—84

About Sunrise: 2

Books on Islam: 88

Addresses for Contact: 90

Conditions of Bai'at (Initiation): 91

"Ever since God appointed me as the Reformer of the Age, I have been observing that a great revolution is underway. The very scholars of Europe and America, who once believed in the Godhead of Jesus, are now, on their own, distancing themselves from this doctrine. The nations, whose people for generations were fond of idols and statues, a great number of them now understand that these idols are meaningless. Although these people are still ignorant of sublime spirituality, and are content with their nominal belief with a few token words, they undoubtedly have thrown the yoke of misguided rituals, myths, and deification from their necks. Now they stand at the entry gate to the house of the Unity of God. It is my hope that soon the Grace of Allah will usher many of them into an abode of peace secured by the Unity of God, the abode bestowed with the true love, true righteousness, and true knowledge. This hope is not simply the figment of my imagination, but rather, a Divine revelation that has been vouchsafed to me."

*Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him),
Lecture Lahore, p.181*

Foreword

One of God's greatest blessings in our age is human recognition of the role of reasoning and rationality in all spheres of life. Scientific advancements and technological breakthroughs continue to change the world's landscape. The cascading influence of rigorous rational inquiry extends to human religious life. When pitted against the teachings of Christianity, however, such inquiry has not always been welcome with open arms. In 1633, for example, the Holy Roman Church infamously declared Galileo to be a heretic for believing that the earth moved around the sun. It was not until 1992 when the Vatican recanted the Church's historical condemnation of Galileo—indeed, it took several centuries for the Church to accept Galileo's contribution to the world. Today, scores of scholars continue to question and analyze the traditional understanding of Christianity through the very rigorous rational inquiry that did not historically bode well for some of the famous thinkers who did the same in the past. These scholars derive entirely new meanings of the most basic teachings of Christianity—meanings that might very well lead to a reformation of Christianity as we know it today.

This issue aims to survey the recent scholarly attempts to reexamine Christian doctrine. In so doing, our aim is to show not only the viability of the scholarly treatments, but also the surprising and refreshing correlation between these treatments and the beliefs of some Muslims concerning Christianity. That the new scholarly interpretations of Christianity can somehow be reconciled with a unique Muslim understanding of Christianity suggests the possibility of the unification of a large part of mankind. Interestingly enough, a pious Muslim thinker Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, predicted this very possibility 150 years ago. Ahmad claimed to be the awaited reformer of the time as predicted in all religious faiths. In 1899, he declared in one of his writings thus:

“I have written a book entitled *Jesus in India*, and this is a great victory as I firmly believe that this book would result promptly or with slight delay in the reconciliation,

rather close harmony, of these two great nations—Christian and Muslims—that are apart for centuries. They would abandon their differences and shake hands with each other in friendship and this is a matter decreed in the heavens.”¹

We must point out at the outset that our issue focuses on the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community’s interpretations of Christianity, not on the mainstream Sunni interpretations. This issue will address most of the main beliefs that form the foundation of Christianity and explore the new understanding of these beliefs by modern scholars. This new understanding will then be juxtaposed with the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. We argue that the Christianity that emerges from the new scholarly interpretations is really a reflection of the true teachings of Jesus Christ (may peace be upon him) that had been systematically manipulated and distorted over time. Indeed, the true teachings of Christ are consistent with the teachings of Islam, and thus the reconciliation of Christianity and Islam is both viable and desirable. We wholeheartedly invite all good Christians to evaluate the new interpretations of Christian doctrine and see how they relate to the Ahmadiyya interpretation of Islam.

Anwer Khan
April 2004

1. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, Volume 15, p. 124, Rabwah Pakistan.

Introduction

The title, *Metaphoric Light and Literal Darkness*, begins with the premise that the realms of metaphoric and literal meaning are vastly different. Webster's defines 'literal' as "according to the letter or verbal statement... not figurative or metaphorical... not exaggerated." It defines 'metaphor' as "a figure of speech in which one object is likened to another by speaking of it as it were that other." The Greek word *metaphorrein* means "to transfer." Metaphoric language, as such, presupposes a transfer of meaning. A metaphor is a comparison made by a direct statement. Its common usage is evident as is its use in Divine Scriptures. Metaphor is not simply a literary device; it is also a tool used by God's chosen to explain the deeper meaning behind the religious teachings. Thus, when Jesus says, "I am the bread," he suggests that his teachings nourish one's soul as bread nourishes one's body. A literal interpretation of this statement would obfuscate the spiritual complexity of Jesus' message. When Jesus says, "I am the true vine," he does not mean that he is a literal vine, but that he can be compared to one insofar as he gives guidance and direction to his followers. Taking metaphoric expressions literally can totally mislead one. For example, in Isaiah 55:12, we read: "the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Many have built a straw man out of this teaching of literal interpretation, alleging that we have to take everything in the Bible literally.

Why do the Scriptures use metaphoric language? As we know from our daily experience, metaphors persuade us to stop and think. It is this deeper reflection that brings forth desired wisdom. In addition to better comprehension, the acceptance of this latent wisdom results in bigger and better rewards, while rejection of accepting the metaphoric light may result in misguidance. For example, the Jews were waiting for the advent of Messiah; when Jesus presented himself as the Messiah, they objected saying that Elijah had to physically descend from heaven before the advent of Messiah; as Elijah had not physically descended from the heaven on a chariot, they refused to accept him.

In Kings II, 2:11 the ascension of Elijah has been mentioned thus:

"And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

In Malachi 4:5, we read the return of Elijah thus:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

The above two verses figuratively describe the physical ascension of Elijah by way of a whirlwind on a chariot and the prophecy of his return before the coming of Jesus.

In light of these verses, the Jews were waiting for the descending of Elijah on a chariot and the advent of the Messiah to follow Elijah. Both the sequence and the mode of the advents were registered in the minds of the Jews exactly as they were forecasted. But in the face of this understanding, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah; the Jews of his time did not accept him as the true Messiah because the words of Scripture were never fulfilled in the manner and sequence they were told. Having heard this argument, Jesus presents the ultimate wisdom, the metaphoric light explaining the metaphors thus:

“And his disciples asked him saying then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Then Jesus answered and said: “Elijah is truly coming first and will restore all things. But I say unto you that Elijah has come already and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished: Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist” (Matthew 17:10-13).

From this passage it is clear that John the Baptist is Elijah; John the Baptist was born of a mother and did not descend physically from heaven on a chariot; and Jesus is the true Messiah who was prophesied by Prophet Malachi (Malachi, 4:5). Jesus explains to us through metaphor that there is no physical ascension of any prophet; such ascension refers only to a spiritual exaltation, and the prediction of the second advent of a prophet does not refer to the coming of the same prophet, but rather a person with the same attributes of the one who came earlier.

Having understood the concept of metaphors and their literal expressions, I must point out that the problem of competing meanings is not specific to Christians only. Muslims, too, confuse literal and metaphoric meanings in spite of the unequivocal teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace be upon him). A great majority of Muslims have grossly misunderstood the Qur'anic metaphors regarding Jesus and also the sayings of the Prophet regarding the second advent. They believe that Jesus did not die on the cross, but someone who looked like him was put in his place instead, and Jesus was ascended to heaven with the physical body and is still alive. Jesus will come again with the same physical body and, along with the *mahdi* or *reformer*, he will establish peace on earth.

The errors the majority of Muslims commit stem from the same ignorance of metaphoric understandings of scriptures. Interestingly, the prophet of Islam predicted this predicament of Christian and Muslims as a sign for the need for a Divine reformer. The task of this reformer would be to present the pristine truth behind the prophecies so beautifully related by past prophets.

By the Grace and Mercy of God, this awaited reformer has appeared; his name is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). He founded the community of Muslims known worldwide today as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. He has clarified all the concepts that led to misunderstandings regarding the life and death of Jesus. In this regard, he wrote his masterpiece book, *Jesus in India*. He writes:

“I have written this book, so that, by adducing proofs from established facts, from conclusive historical evidence of proved value and from ancient documents of non-Muslims, I might remove the serious misconceptions which are current among Muslims and among most Christian sects regarding the earlier and later life of Jesus, on whom be peace, misconceptions, the dangerous implications of which has for long been noticed in the morals of the Muslims in this country.”

Hadhrat Ahmad has presented the truth behind all the major doctrines that have caused so much dispute in today's world. He further predicted that the scholars in the latter days would come to the same conclusions that he referred to in his books. In the light of this glad tidings, I embark upon a journey to review the books of the modern

scholars and juxtapose them against the Ahmadiyya Muslim belief presented by *Hadhrat* Ahmad. In this book, I endeavor to re-examine the six core doctrines of Christianity in light of new scholarship that points to their metaphoric significance. I contrast the traditional and contemporary interpretations of these doctrines and then compare the contemporary interpretations to the interpretations of *Hadhrat* Ahmad. I do so as part of a sincere effort to suggest a possible reconciliation between Christianity and at least one prominent interpretation of Islam. I hope my humble attempt enlightens any and all seekers of truth.

THE APOSTLE'S CREED

The Apostle's Creed States:

"I believe in God the father almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead."

The main doctrines of Christianity as derived from the above creed are as follows:

1. Belief in One God, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and the earth.
2. Christ is the only begotten Son of God.
3. Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.
4. Christ died on the cross for the redemption of mankind.
5. Christ bodily ascended to the heaven.
6. Christ will come again physically from heavens and will judge between good and evil.

Beliefs 1 and 3 are common to both Christianity and Islam and hence will not be discussed in this issue. The other doctrines will be

studied in the light of modern scholarship, and a comparative study with the Islamic view will be presented thereafter. The main objective of this exercise is to enlighten our readers as to how the two great religions, Christianity and Islam, which span more than 50% of the world's population, might be effectively reconciled through a reexamination of Beliefs 2, 4, 5, and 6. The great religions of the world faced the problem of having some of their essential teachings being taken literally instead of metaphorically. But when blind following pales and rationality becomes preeminent once again, one finds how often allegoric or symbolic language cannot be taken in literal terms. When Christ said that he is the bread, what he really meant was that he is a source of spiritual nourishment.

Today, the life and death of Christ grows increasingly relevant; it is an appropriate time to rethink the major Christian doctrines in light of modern scholarship. With the hat of rationality and through the lens of metaphor, we should revisit the sources of traditional Christian doctrines and judge for ourselves what wisdom we might derive from this new study. In this issue, we have attempted to present traditional Christian doctrines, their modern scholarly reinterpretation, and the similarities of this reinterpretation with Islamic beliefs concerning the same Christian doctrines. We request our readers to objectively follow the text, the expert opinion of modern scholars, and then genuinely reexamine their traditional understanding of Christianity. This reexamination is an exercise in transforming literal darkness into metaphoric light, and we view the reexamined teachings of Christianity as offering the hopeful prospect of reconciling Christianity with Islam. The true teachings of Christ, understood in this new light, resemble the true teachings of Muhammad. Indeed, it is through their teachings that man might better establish a personal link with his Creator.

Jesus as “Son of God”

The concept of Jesus as “Son of God,” although formulated in 323 A.D., has been under close scrutiny for its efficacy and origin. Scores of scholars have thoroughly reviewed all the connotations of its usage and have arrived at the conclusion that the expression “Son of God” is a metaphoric expression suggesting Jesus’ closeness to God—a title of veneration with no implied literal meaning. This expression was used for angels, kings, pious elites, Israelites, and many other righteous men. In the literal sense, it was never applied to Jesus during his life. Apostle Paul, in his zeal of spreading the Gospel message to Greeks (who professed three Gods) created the idea of trinity to attract Greeks to Christianity. The phrase “Son of God” is clearly a later interpolation that has no basis in the Bible. Several reputable theologians from various countries of the world attest to the metaphoric usage of the phrase. We present a number of excerpts from the writings of these scholars. This modern understanding, when compared with Islamic teachings, finds concordance rather than parity. We hope that our Christian readers will reevaluate these findings and arrive at their own conclusions.

Traditional Belief:

***Jesus Christ is the only begotten “Son of God.”
He is the second deity in the Trinity.***

Contemporary Belief:

The phrase “Son of God” is a metaphoric expression denoting the strong love and affection God had for Jesus.

This phrase does not imply that Jesus is the literal son of God.

Several scholars have studied the phrase “Son of God” in the various connotations recorded in the Bible and have attempted to understand it using its traditional parlance. In light of their investigations, they have arrived at the understanding that this phrase is a metaphoric expression of the closeness of God with Jesus. Most of these scholars are of the opinion that the traditional meaning of the expression “Son of God” that was formulated into the Apostles’ Creed

in A.D. 325 at Nicea has evolved, and Jesus, initially considered human, has attained this Christological image of Christ.

Reverend Raymond Brown, Auburn Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies at Union Theological Seminary, considers “Son of God” to be a post-Crucifixion expression. The term was never used by Jesus during his life. He writes:

“When we turn to the use of “the Son of God” by or about Jesus in his lifetime and its possible appearance in AD 30/33 in Jewish inquiries made about him, there is far less evidence than there was for “the Messiah.” In ancient near Eastern and Greco-Roman polytheism, rulers, heroes and wonderworkers were entitled “son(s) of god” because mythically or literally they were thought to have been begotten through a god’s mating with human being. In Israelite thought angels could be called figuratively “sons of God” (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; Ps. 29:1; Dan. 3:25[3:92]). God speaks of Israel as “my son” (Hosea 11:1); and a pious individual could be referred to as “son of God” (Wisdom 2:18) or a ‘son of Most High’ (Sirach 4:10).”¹

After describing the different usages of the expression “Son of God,” Rev. Brown concludes that the conventional usage of Jesus as “Son of God” occurred after the crucifixion event. He writes:

“Thus there is reason in the Gospels, read perceptively, to think that unlike “the Messiah” the title ‘Son of God’ was not applied to Jesus in his lifetime by his followers or a fortiori by himself. It was a revealed early post ministry insight. This would mean that the High Priest’s question phrased in Mark 14:61, “Are you ... the Son of the Blessed {=God}?” was not the formulation in a Jewish investigation of Jesus in AD 30/33.”²

Reverend Brown compares the two titles “Son of God” and “The Messiah”:

“Overall, then if Jesus was accused of Blasphemy in AD 30/33, it is not likely that the sole or even principal basis for that accusation was that the followers hailed him as the expected Messiah of the House of David. It is

unlikely that this title ["Son of God"] was used of Jesus during the lifetime by himself or by his followers."³

The foregoing tends to negate the use of the expression "Son of God" by Jesus in his lifetime or by his followers. The expression is clearly a later addition to the Gospels. If this opinion is factual, then it could rule out the expression's divine efficacy and render it but an ordinary expression of veneration. This would, in turn, deny the literal sonship of Jesus.

Another English scholar, **John Hick**, Professor Emeritus at Claremont School of Graduate Studies and Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Research in the Humanities at University of Birmingham, has written several books in the field of reevaluating Christian dogmas. His book The Metaphor of God Incarnate includes the following description of his work:

"In this major theological work, John Hick refutes the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus of Nazareth as God Incarnate, who becomes a man to die for the sins of the world and founded the church to proclaim this. Hick, editor of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, offers an intriguing alternative view. He argues 'that Jesus did not teach what was to become the Orthodox Christian understanding of him; that the dogma of Jesus' two natures, human and divine cannot be presented satisfactorily; that the traditional dogma has been used to justify great human evils, that the idea of divine incarnation is better understood metaphorical than as literal, that we can understand Jesus to be our Lord and the one who has made God real to us; and that a nontraditional Christianity based upon this understanding of Jesus can be seen as one among a number of different human responses to the ultimate transcendent reality we call God.'"⁴

In the third chapter of his book, Hick writes:

'A further point of broad agreement among the New Testament scholars is even more important for understanding the development of Christology. This is that the historical Jesus did not make the claim to deity that later Christian thought was to make of him; he did not

understand himself to be God, or God the Son, incarnate... But it is extremely unlikely that the historical Jesus thought himself in any such way. Indeed he would probably have rejected the idea as blasphemous; one of the sayings attributed to him is, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone' (Mark 10:18)."⁵

Explaining his thesis, Ilick further writes:

'And my thesis concerning the Christian doctrine of incarnation is that as a literal hypothesis it has not been found to have any acceptable meaning. Every content that has been suggested has had to be rejected as mistaken or, in traditional ecclesiastical language, heretical. Indeed, the basic heresy has always been to treat religious metaphor as literal metaphysics."⁶

The last sentence of the above quote is quite intriguing. We have noticed that what most scholars have done is simply look to the Scriptural text, the time and environment it was composed, and compared it with the verbiage and language of that time; objectively evaluating these expressions of veneration, these scholars ultimately adjusted the true meaning of these expressions in the light of modern understanding. It is important to point out that historically there were two different cultural settings: a Jewish one and a Greek or Hellenistic one. The same expressions have had different perspectives and meanings in the two cultures. Apostle Paul, who was a zealous preacher of the Gospel, wanted eagerly for the Greeks to join the fold of Christianity. To satisfy the Greeks, he managed to compromise basic ideologies. At the time, the Greeks held beliefs in three Gods, and since Jesus taught the Unity of God, the concept of trinity was a convenient tool to win the sympathies of the Greeks. As such, the "sonship of Jesus" was construed literally in spite of a dearth of evidence in the New Testament pointing to that construal.

Marcus J. Borg is Hendera Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture in the Philosophy department at Oregon State University. He is one of the modern scholars who have brought forth new meanings to the age-old dogmas. His book Jesus: a New Vision published in 1987 made the bestseller list. He also edited Jesus at 2000. In the second chapter of Jesus: A New Vision, Borg raises the question of how a Jew from Galilee turned out to be the "Son of God" and concludes that the

expression was historically understood as metaphoric, but has now been transformed into a principle Christian doctrine. He writes:

"What becomes the dominant way of speaking about Jesus in the Christian tradition—Jesus as Son of God—provides an excellent illustration of this (conceptual development—author) process. Son of God began as a relational metaphor. Within Judaism by the time of Jesus, it had a number of meanings. In the Hebrew Bible, it could be used to refer to the king on the day of his coronation: 'You are my son; today I have begotten you' (Ps 2.7). It could also be used to refer to Israel as a whole: 'When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son' (Hos. 11.1). According to Jewish traditions near the time of Jesus, this metaphor could be used to refer to other Jewish persons. What all of these have in common--- the king, Israel, a Spirit person—is a relationship of intimacy with God. Thus to call Jesus Son of God was to speak of an intimacy of relationship between Jesus and God. As Son of God developed in early Christian tradition, it moved from being a relational metaphor to being a biological metaphor in the birth stories in Matthew and Luke. In these stories, Jesus is conceived by the Spirit and, if the texts are read literally, is Son of God became conceptualized. Specifically to call Jesus Son of God became an ontological and doctrinal statement about the ultimate status of Jesus, reaching its climax in Nicene Creed. There, in the language of fourth century Christian theology, with strong undercurrents of Hellenistic philosophy, Jesus is spoken of as 'the only begotten Son of God,' 'true God of true God,' and 'of one substance as the Father.' Metaphor became doctrine."⁷

In the next two paragraphs, Borg describes the timing of this transformation when this metaphoric expression underwent change. In A.D. 50, Paul wrote of Jesus as "descended from David according to the flesh, and designated Son of God in Power by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1.3-4). Further: "This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Here God made Jesus both Lord and Christ after Crucifixion. Borg continues:

“As the New Testament developed, Jesus’ status as Son of God was pushed further and further back into his life. According to Mark, our earliest Gospel, Jesus at his baptism heard a voice declaring him to be the Son of God. According to Matthew and Luke, written some twenty years later, Jesus was Son of God from his conception. And in the first chapter of John, that which became incarnate in Jesus was ‘from the beginning.’ Thus, Jesus’ status as Son of God was finally pushed back into the time before his life. Again we see the process whereby Son of God undergoes a development that moves metaphor to ontological claim.”⁸

Borg also compares the characteristics of these two figures of Jesus before and after Easter and explains that the peasant Jew who was a beloved of God and showed the way became God himself or God-the Son, the second deity in the concept of Trinity.

Hans Kung is a renowned German Theologian. He has been Professor of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Studies at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Kung revisited the Nicene and the Chalcedony Creeds that spelled out the belief that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, made from the same substance and hence the second deity in the Godhead. Kung suggests that these do not carry any literal weight and have been outdated with the passage of time. What they simply mean is that God was present in Jesus and revealed Himself through Christ—essentially a role that all prophets of God display. Kung opposed the physical resurrection of Jesus and simply equates this resurrection to the exaltation of Jesus’ spiritual status. Most contemporary scholars opposed Kung and urged him to retract his ideologies. In response, Kung wrote another book entitled Nothing But the Truth in which he responds to the allegations leveled against him. The ecumenical church leaders, he maintains, view Jesus’ Christology from above or descending from God, while he observes it from below where Jesus as man rose to spiritual excellences by obeying God and loving mankind. Excerpts from his book On Being a Christian are reproduced below. Discussing the expressions used for Jesus, Kung writes:

“All these metaphors are meant to express both the unique relationship of the father to Jesus and of Jesus to the father as also the unique relationship of Jesus to men: his work and his significance as God’s revealer for the

salvation of the world. Hence it is obvious why talk about Jesus Christ always easily turned into talk to Jesus Christ, why faith and profession of faith were always accompanied by acclamation, invocation, prayer.”⁸

Jesus as a Messenger of God turns into deity because veneration and talk of Jesus turns into talking to Jesus.

Bishop John Shelby Spong, an Episcopal Bishop of Newark, New Jersey, has written many critical books that attempt to re-examine traditional dogmas and boldly refute their current import. He urges the Church administration to rethink their stance on these fundamental beliefs that no longer are able to sustain awakened rational minds. He further asserts that if this traditional cloak will not be changed the collapse of Christendom is imminent. He coins the term “Christians in Exile” for all those believing Christians who cannot repeat the Apostle’s Creed with honesty and from their hearts. They pay lip-service to their beliefs with no verification from their hearts. Concepts of trinity, the sonship of Jesus, resurrection, the physical ascension of Jesus and his return must be re-examined according to Bishop Spong. In his book, Why Christianity must Change or Die, Bishop Spong writes:

“[Jesus] is first called God’s ‘only son.’ Does this mean none of the rest of us is or can be the son or daughter of God? That kind of exclusive claim has been made throughout the ages with great power by the Christian Church. It is part of our religious mentality, no matter how limited and ungodlike it makes God seem to be. This phrase also seems to suggest that none of the other religious systems of the world can offer its people a point of connection with the Divine. Many Christians have also made exactly that claim, and its effect for centuries has been to fuel a quite unholy attitude of religious imperialism. This arrogant claim also denies our own modern experience. I have met holiness in Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, which I am not willing to deny or to denigrate. So what does the phrase ‘God’s only Son’ mean to those of us who cannot and will not be bound by the religious prejudices of the past?”⁹

In his book Rescuing Bible from Fundamentalism Bishop Spong explains that the “Son of God” expression is a metaphor and cannot be taken literally.

Andrew Harvey is a mystical scholar and has authored more than thirty books. In his book Son of Man, Harvey sketches the mystical path of Jesus to Christ. Regarding the Sonship concept, he writes:

“Modern scholarship also makes clear that there is no firm evidence to suggest that Jesus thought of himself as the Messiah, or as ‘the unique Son of God’; the only title we can safely say he gave himself is Son of Man. (as in Matthew 11:19). He likely used this generic term to identify himself with those he was addressing and to emphasize that he shared with them a common destiny and destitution... The Savior icon, in other words, is a later “inspiration” of the early Christian Church, reeling under the impact of Jesus’ life and of transmission of his mystical force and essence that continued after the crucifixion and resurrection; it has nothing to do with Jesus’ own vision of himself and of his mission. Jesus’ self-understanding did not include thinking and speaking of himself as the ‘Son of God,’ and his message was not about believing in him.

Knowing Jesus in this way challenges the beliefs not only of all fundamentalist churches but also of all those who place emphasis on Jesus Christ as the unique and all powerful savior; the historical Jesus never claimed for himself such an honor, never saw himself in such inflated and exclusive terms, and never interpreted his crucifixion as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Such interpretations represent the visions of later followers and have nothing authentic about them (except the wonder and enthusiasm that prompted their evolution in the first place).”¹⁰

The following are various opinions of scholars who have construed “Son of God” to mean affection and love for Jesus rather than the biological Sonship of God.

Maurice Wiles denounced the concept of Sonship of Jesus along with six Anglicans in their works published as Myth of God Incarnate. Wiles dismisses Biblical references that allegedly deal with the Divinity

of Christ or his Sonship as is recorded in John's Gospel. "These are later interpolations and have no origins in Christianity whatsoever," ¹¹ argues Wiles.

James Dunn, an eminent British Theologian in his book Christology in the Making writes:

"In the Roman world of the New Testament period, 'divine' and 'son of God' and even 'God' were used more or less interchangeably. Heroes were frequently called 'divine' in Homer, and from Augustus onwards "divine" became a fixed term in the imperial cult, 'the divine Caesar.' At the other end of the spectrum it could mean simply 'pious', 'godly.' " ¹²

Geza Vermes, another theologian, pens his views in his book Jesus and the World of Judaism thus:

" 'Son of God' was always understood metaphorically in Jewish circles. In Jewish sources, its use never implies participation by the person so-named in the divine nature. It may in consequence safely be assumed that if the medium in which Christian theology developed had been Hebrew not Greek, it would not have produced an incarnation doctrine as this is traditionally understood." ¹³

Islamic View

"Say Allah is One, He is independent. He begets not nor is He begotten. And there is none equal to Him." ¹⁴

This is the cardinal doctrine of *Tauhid* or the Unity of God as taught in the Holy Qur'an. In the chapter "Maryam" (named after Mary, the mother of Jesus), Allah categorically rejects the Sonship alleged to God in Christianity. He says:

"That was Jesus, son of Mary. This is a statement of truth concerning which they entertain doubt. It does not befit the majesty of Allah to take unto Himself a son. Holy is He. When He decrees a thing, He says, be and it comes into Being. Said Jesus, 'Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him alone, this is the right path.' " ¹⁵

In the same chapter, in verse 91, we read:

“And they say, ‘The Gracious God has taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly, you have indeed uttered a most hideous thing. The heavens might well nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleaves asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, because they ascribe a son to the Gracious God. It becomes not the Gracious God that He would take unto Himself a son.”¹⁶

Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad in his commentary on these verses writes:

“The dogma that Jesus is the Son of God is so hideous that the heavens, the earth and the mountains might well break into pieces and fall asunder at its enormity. The belief is repugnant to heavenly beings (*al-Samawāt*) because it is against Divine attributes and against all that they stand for. It is revolting for human beings on the earth (*al-Ard*), because it offends against the dictates of human nature and man’s intellect and reason recoil in sheer disgust from it.”¹⁷

Summary of Different Beliefs about Jesus.

Traditional Belief	Contemporary View	Ahmadiyya Muslim View
Jesus is the only begotten Son of God in the literal sense of the phrase	Jesus has been called the “Son of God” in a metaphoric sense, which does not imply the physical son-ship of God	Islam negates any association of any deity with God or any son-ship to God. “He begets not nor is He begotten.”

We sincerely invite all the Christians of the world to reflect on the contemporary views of some Christian scholars as these views might bring forth an era of reconciliation between Christianity and Islam.

End Notes

1. Raymond E. Brown, *Death of Messiah*, Volume One (New York: Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), p. 482.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 492

4. John Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1993), back cover.
5. Ibid., p. 27
6. Ibid., p. 106
7. Marcus Borg, Jesus at 2000 (Oxford, United Kingdom: West View Press, 1998), p. 13-14.
8. Hans Kung, trans. by Edward Quinn, On Being a Christian (New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Co., 1984), p. 444
9. John Shelby Spong, Why Christianity Must Change or Die (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), p. 73, 82.
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12. James Dunn, Christology in the Making (London: SCM Press, 1980), p. 41.
13. Geza Vermes, Jesus and the World of Judaism (London: SCM Press 1983), p. 72.
14. Holy Qur'an, 112:1-5.
15. Ibid., 19:35-37.
16. Ibid., verse 91.
17. Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Invitation to Ahmadiyyat (London: Islam International Publications, 1980)

The Concept of Original Sin

The concept of original sin simply entails that the first man, Adam, sinned and that resulted in the transference of sin to his progeny. Simply stated, it may be described that man by nature is sinful due to the sin of Adam. In order to correct this situation a sacrifice of a sinless person is required. This sinless person was Jesus who was born fatherless. His death on the cross rectified or paid for this original sin. Although this concept was imported from heathen philosophy, it became a respectable doctrine in the third century. Saint Augustine made this into a Christian dogma of the Roman Catholic Church in the fifth century. Its proponents make us believe that this is based on Biblical teachings and present passages as proof texts of the Bible that teach this concept. Modern scholars have closely looked at those passages and have concluded that the original perception is grossly erroneous. The verses were not read in context and were blatantly interpreted to adopt the literal meaning of a few verses and the metaphoric meaning of others. The concept has no roots in the Biblical Scriptures when they are read while maintaining the entire context in which they are placed. Modern Christian scholars have pointed out that this dogma not only fails the tests of commonsense but also promotes evil and immorality in the society. These scholars have thoroughly studied the Biblical verses that allegedly propose this concept and have shown the follies and gross mistakes of the proponents of this doctrine. In conclusion, they attest that man's nature is flawless and each one is bestowed with the wisdom to choose right from wrong. It is this choice that is vital to the phenomenon of accountability on the Day of Judgment. When juxtaposed with Islamic belief, there remains no difference between Islamic perspective and the modern Christian perspective. The scholars cited in the text include eminent theologians and individuals with esteemed reputation. The Islamic perspective is presented next and compared with the traditional and contemporary views in a tabular form.

Are men born sinners? For Christianity, the answer is yes. Simply stated, Eve persuaded Adam to commit sin, and because of that sin, they not only died, but mankind at large inherited their sin. Consequently, every child who is born in this world is sinful. Since

Jesus was without a father, he was born sinless, and by offering his life on the cross, Jesus redeemed mankind from sin. All denominations of Christianity unanimously accept the doctrine of original and inherited sin. Indeed, the doctrines of atonement and salvation have their roots in the doctrine of original sin.

Historic records indicate that the doctrine of original sin started from heathen philosophy and merged into Christian theology as early as the first century. The early converts to Christianity joined the Christian fold from Paganism and they carried some of their Pagan beliefs into Christianity. Acclaimed historians of theology have studied this concept in detail and have shared their opinions in lectures that are recorded under the title "Systematic Theology." In general, they do not agree with any of the three main theories presented by traditional scholars and suggest that the concept of original sin cannot be justified from the Bible.

Charles Finney, a renowned Christian Theologian, describes this transfer of heathen philosophy in his book Lectures on Systematic Theology thus:

"It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as every one may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself."¹

He continues to express his opinion about original sin thus:

"This doctrine is a stumbling-block both to the church and the world, infinitely dishonorable to God, and an abomination alike to God and the human intellect, and should be banished from every pulpit, and from every formula of doctrine, and from the world. It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as every one may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself. This view of moral depravity that I am opposing has long been the stronghold of Universalism. From it, the Universalists inveigh with resistless force against the idea that sinners should be sent to an eternal hell. Assuming the long-defended doctrine of original or constitutional sinfulness, they proceeded to show, that it would be

infinitely unreasonable and unjust in God to send them to hell. What! Create them with a sinful nature, from which proceed, by a law of necessity, actual transgressions, and then send them to an eternal hell for having this nature, and for transgressions that are unavoidable! Impossible! They say; and the human intellect responds, Amen.”¹

Alfred T. Overstreet, a Christian Clergyman, performed missionary work for several years and preached the dogma of original sin until he came across Charles Finney’s work on systematic theology. He then recanted his beliefs and understood that the concept of original sin could not be attributed to the teachings of Jesus. He revisited the biblical verses that were quoted to support the concept of original sin and learned that these verses were misinterpreted and literalized. In his book Are Men Born Sinners he quotes the following passages from the Bible and explains that, when read in proper context looking at both preceding and subsequent verses, a totally new meaning of original sin emerges. I would include only one detailed example to shed light on his reasoning; the others are listed without a detailed analysis.

Psalm 51:5 “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” ... And the above text would teach that men are born sinners if it were meant to be taken literally. But the language of this text is not literal, it is figurative. Both the context and reality demand a figurative interpretation of this text... So if verse 5 can be made to teach that men are born sinners, then verse seven can be made to teach that hyssop cleanses us from sin when it says, ‘Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.’ Also verse 8 can be made to teach the doctrine that God breaks the Christian’s bones when he sins, and that his broken bones rejoice when he is forgiven: ‘Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice’...” The same rules of interpretation that would permit Psalm 51:5 to teach that babies are born sinners, would, if applied to these passages... allow for every kind of perversion and wild interpretation of God’s word.”²

Overstreet continues thus:

The doctrine of original sin is false: it slanders and libels the character of God, it shocks man's God-given consciousness of justice, and it flies in the face of the plainest teachings of God's holy word. The doctrine of Original sin is not a Bible doctrine. It is a grotesque myth that contradicts the Bible on almost every page."³

Overstreet further lists thirteen reasons why the concept of original sin is false:

It makes sin a misfortune and a calamity rather than a crime.

It makes the sinner deserve pity and compassion rather than blame for his sins.

It excuses the sinner.

It makes God responsible for sin.

It dishonors God. It makes him arbitrary, cruel and unjust.

It causes ministers to wink at and excuse sin.

It begets complacency and a low standard of religion among Christians.

It is a tumbling block for the unsaved.

It makes Jesus a sinner or it must deny his humanity.

It contradicts the Bible.

It "adds to" and "takes from" the Bible. God warns against this in Deut. 4:2 and Rev. 22:18, 19.

It begets the false doctrines and false interpretations of the Scriptures.

It is ridiculous, absurd, and unreasonable. It contradicts the necessary and irresistible affirmations of every man's consciousness and reason, which is something that no true doctrine of the Word of God could do."⁴ P. 102-103.

When we read the Bible, we find the following clear-cut statements that shed light on the pure nature of man:

ECC 7:29: “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out inventions.”

Gen. 1:26, 27 “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.”

1 Cor. 11:7 “Man is the image and glory of God.”

James 3:9 “Therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.”

A closer look at the Bible reveals that both the Old and New Testaments suggest how the responsibility of sin is upon the person who sins and upon no one else. Consider the following:

Deut.24:16 “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”⁴

The same concept has been cited in Chron.25: 4 and EZ.18: 14, 17

Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton University, a well-respected theologian of the nineteenth century, dismissed the concept of original sin. His lectures in Systematic Theology were printed in the mid twentieth century. In one of his lectures, he states:

“It may be difficult to reconcile the doctrine of innate evil dispositions with the justice and goodness of God, but that is a difficulty which does not pertain to this subject. A malignant being is an evil being, if endowed with reason, whether he was so made or so born, and a benevolent rational being is good in the universal judgment of men, whether he was so created or so born. We admit that it is repugnant to our moral judgments that God should create an evil being; or that any being should be born in a state of sin, unless his being so born is the consequence of a just judgment.”⁵

In the same book, he exclaims:

“The same God whose penetrating glance burns away every artifice with which a man may envelop himself and reaches at once to the naked reality, is represented as swathing. His judgment with a gigantic artifice, in that He holds countless millions guilty of a trespass which He

knows was committed before their personal existence, and which they could no more prevent than they could hinder the fiat of creation. If this is justice, then justice is a word of unknown meaning.”⁶

Henry Sheldon, rejecting all the theories that justify the concept of original sin, writes as follows:

“An evil which is matter of pure inheritance cannot rationally be made the ground of the moral reprobation of the person inheriting. To him it is a calamity, and more properly calls for compassion than for condemnation... If it is irrational cruelty to blame one for a bodily deficit which was thus given, rather than acquired by personal misconduct, it is, in like manner, gross injustice to blame one for a spiritual deficit which was imposed outright and in no part was acquired”.⁷

Ryan Hicks, refuting the concept of original sin, asserts:

“In conclusion, it is putting it far too kindly to say that the doctrine of original sin is pure and utter foolishness and nonsense. It contradicts the natural God-given reasoning that we use to explain EVERY single BIBLICAL doctrine. It makes God into a monster that has formed His creatures to be damned from birth and disobey Him by nature, thus they have no true free will in the matter. It thoroughly perverts personal responsibility and charges God with folly. It does not lead to holiness, rather to excuse making and denial of personal wrong doings causing one to be damned. (People have excused murder, adultery, lying, cheating, sodomy, rape, incest, coveting, idolatry, and all manner of sin on the basis of this one false doctrine alone. It lends itself to help people excuse sin rather than get free from sin. The fruit of the original sin doctrine is a testimony against it.) Thus, we should stick with the Bible’s plain teachings and always avoid the doctrines and commandments of men.”⁸

An objective reader would note how the concept of original sin is untenable. The concept would promote evil as no one would consider himself or herself accountable for their sins. The concept of repentance

would then have no meaning whatsoever. Why would Jesus have taught us his followers to forgive the digressions of one's neighbors when man would be redeemed through him? Does it not appear strange for God to bestow certain faculties upon man only to punish him for those very faculties?

John Shelby Spong, focusing on this whole concept of Jesus' sacrifice writes:

"Seldom did Christians pause to recognize the ogre into which they had turned God. A human father who would nail his son to a cross for any purpose would be arrested for child abuse. Yet that continued to be said of God as if it made God more holy and more worth of worship."

On the same page, he then reiterates the traditional concept of salvation and comments as follows:

"This view of Christianity is increasingly difficult for many of us to accept or believe. I would choose to lathe rather than to worship a deity who required the sacrifice of his son. But on many other levels as well, this entire theological system, with these strange presuppositions, has completely unraveled in our post modern world. It now needs to be removed quite consciously from Christianity."⁹

Islamic Belief

Islam teaches us that God created man as the best of His creation. Man is born on the nature of God and no sin is associated with his nature at the time of birth. Sin is a willful disobedience to God's commandments and a choice is given to all, to do good or evil. A complete code of life is presented in the Holy Qur'an and Holy Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings be on him) life is made an example to follow. The purpose of man's creation is to recognize God and worship Him. The following few verses of the Holy Qur'an explain this perspective:

"So set thy face to the service of religion as one devoted to God. And follow the nature made by Allah—the nature in which He has created mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah, that is the right religion. But most men know not." Holy Qur'an, 30:31

“And by the soul and its perfection—And He revealed to it what is wrong for it and what is right for it.” Holy Qur’an, 91:7-8

“Surely We have created man in the best make, Then if he works iniquity, We reject him as the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good works; so for them is an unending reward.” Holy Qur’an, 95:5-8

The Holy Qur’an categorically explains that Allah does not burden anyone beyond one’s capacity. This is the declaration of fairness and wisdom pertaining to an individual’s ability to perform in this world. We read:

“Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity. It shall have the reward it earns, and it shall get the punishment it incurs.” Holy Qur’an, 2:287.

Regarding the common notion that Adam sinned or disobeyed, Holy Qur’an exonerates Adam from any disobedience, we read thus:

“And verily, We had made a covenant with Adam beforehand, but he forgot, and We found in him no determination to disobey.” Holy Qur’an 20:116

The philosophy of deeds in Islam is summarized in this statement of Holy Prophet Muhammad: “Deeds are judged by intentions.” As such then, we can see that if no sin was committed by Adam to begin with, then how could it be transferred into man’s progeny ?

Below, the traditional Christian belief, the modern Christian view and the Ahmadiyya Muslim belief are presented side by side in a tabular form for comparison and further study. We encourage all the truth seekers to reflect on these verities.

Traditional Christian Belief	Modern Christian View	Ahmadiyya Muslim Belief
Adam sinned; hence sin was transferred to mankind. Now all children are born with this original sin.	Sin is not a substance that can be transferred from one man to his child. All children are created in the image of God. Later in life, they by their own choice do good or evil. Adam's sin did not make mankind sinful.	God created man on His nature as the best of creation. Sin is a willful disobedience to God's commands, not a genetic code. God can forgive sins irrespective of their number. Adam did not willfully disobey God. He simply forgot.

End Notes

1. Charles Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Wm Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapid, MI, 1953, p 252
2. Alfred T. Overstreet, Are Men Born Sinners? Long Beach, CA Evangel Books Publishing Co. 1995, pages 5, 6
3. Id, pages 102, 103
4. Dr. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Volume II p. 308
5. Id, page 132
6. Henry C Sheldon, System of Christian Doctrine, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 320-321
7. Id
8. Ryan Hicks, Ryan Hicks Ministries, Web page: <http://www.ryanhicksministries.com/originalsin.htm>
9. John Shelby Spong, Why Christianity Must Change or Die, New York; Harper Collins Publishers, 1998, pp. 95

Crucifixion of Jesus

The principle doctrine of Christianity is Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus died on the cross to redeem mankind from sins. He offered his own life as a ransom for the sins of mankind. Emperor Constantine made this doctrine integral to his Creed at the occasion of the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. In A.D. 312, Emperor Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the empire. To win battles, he distributed crucifixes to his armies. Proponents of the doctrine of crucifixion have provided little to no concrete proof to support their beliefs in Jesus' crucifixion. The holy book of Islam, the Holy Qur'an, however, categorically denies Jesus' death on the cross and unequivocally declares that the Jews neither slew Jesus nor did Jesus die on the cross. On the contrary, God exonerated and exalted Jesus (*Hadhrat 'Īsā*), and he migrated in search of the lost tribes of Israel to accomplish his mission.

A new ray of light began the eighteenth century when the German rationalists began to reexamine the Passion narratives in the Bible with greater detail and questioned the origin of the doctrine of crucifixion. In 1899, *Hadhrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote his masterpiece book Jesus in India and presented for the first time evidence of Jesus' survival from the cross. He supported this through the testimonies recorded in the four Gospels, the verses of Holy Qur'an that negated Jesus' death on the Cross, and Buddhist and other historic documents that verify the fact that Jesus survived the crucifixion and migrated toward India in search of the lost tribes of Israel. *Hadhrat* Ahmad even identified the final resting place of Jesus to be located in Kashmir, India.

This discovery revolutionized the intellectual arena. Researchers from around the world began their own investigations with fresh information; thus far, scores of Christian scholars have independently verified and endorsed the arguments presented by Ahmad. A few of these researchers have credited Ahmad in their own books. In this chapter, we present a brief historical survey of the doctrine of crucifixion, the testimonies presented by Ahmad as retrieved from the four Gospels, and some excerpts from the writings of modern scholars who agree with *Hadhrat* Ahmad's thesis. Additional discoveries, like the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Shroud of Turin, will be presented later.

Traditional Belief:

Pontius Pilate crucified Jesus Christ. He died for the sins of mankind and thus became the Redeemer for all.

Contemporary View:

Jesus was put on the cross; he went into coma but did not die. He regained consciousness after three days and came out of the tomb where he met with his disciples.

Although the doctrine of Crucifixion has survived a long span of two thousand years, the developments in the last two centuries have shaken the traditional understanding of the matter. When we take a look at all the narratives of the Passion incidence mentioned in the four Gospels in the light of other sayings in the New and Old Testament, we come to the conclusion that Jesus fulfilled all the Biblical prophecies to the letter, including his survival from the cross.

Why is it that people still cling to this belief of crucifixion? A whole host of reasons have been presented by scholars. One of the main reasons the Christian clergy would like to continue their strong control and evangelists continue their stand is because of economics. If the truth were revealed, the institutions would cease to exist and people would not need mediators to establish their relationship directly with the Creator, the very reason for which Jesus' advent took place.

Before I embark on the journey of revisiting the Passion narratives, I would like to summarize how the tide turned in the last two centuries and who may be credited with providing this new convincing evidence that Jesus did not die on the cross. Let us then scan the work of scholars of the last two centuries.

Karl Freidrich Bahrdt (1741-1792) Considered the forerunner of German rationalists, Bahrdt expressed his doubts about the traditional view of Jesus' death on the cross. In one of his books, he writes:

“... Jesus has been put to death: he had suffered all tortures of an evil-doer, all pains of death, but he also survived them.”¹

In Bahrt's opinion Jesus was saved with the help of Luke the Physician and Joseph of Arimathea, who resuscitated him. Bahrt, however, fails to present any compelling proof for his hypothesis.

Karl Heinrich George Venturini (1768-1849). Venturini also shared Bahrt's hypothesis that Jesus somehow survived crucifixion. He points out that one of the members of the Essene brotherhood scared the guards away and went into the tomb to retrieve Jesus, who later met with his disciples for forty days and then disappeared. He published this hypothesis in his book translated in English entitled *Natural History of the Great Prophet of Nazareth* (1806).²

Heinrich Eberhardt G. Paulus (1761-1851). Paulus essentially expanded on Bahrdt's ideology, referring to the state of Jesus on the cross as that of a dwindling consciousness:

"The dense fumes preceded the earthquake (Matt 27:51). These fumes caused difficulties in breathing. Jesus, according to Paulus, was in a state of unconsciousness. The spear was pierced not to kill Jesus but to test the feelings of Jesus who appeared dead. Paulus was convinced that Jesus did not only move when taken down from the cross, but was not simply dead."³

In the 1830s, F.E.D. Schirmacher also endorsed the notion that Jesus survived crucifixion. None of these scholars, however, provided any solid evidence, although they certainly deduced their arguments from the passion narratives.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). As a devout follower of Islam, *Hadhrat* Ahmad already believed that Jesus did not die on the cross as has been declared in the Holy Qur'an. He, however, did extensive research and produced a series of manuscripts that included the following:

1. Biblical testimonies regarding Jesus' survival from the cross
2. Medical evidence as covered in the passion narratives
3. Evidence from Buddhist literature
4. Historic/geographic/anthropologic evidence
5. Evidence from the Holy Qur'an
6. Discovery of the tomb of Jesus

Hadhrat Ahmad wrote many books to identify the errors pertaining to the life and death of Jesus committed by both Christians and

Muslims. He verified the truths mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and Bible proving the following:

1. Jesus is a beloved of God, a great Prophet for Israelites.
2. He was born of the virgin Mary.
3. He showed many miracles (e.g., awakening the dead, healing the lepers, etc.) that were of a spiritual nature possessing sublime value; by taking literal meaning to these miracles people have idolized them.
4. Jesus was put on the cross, but he survived; after gaining consciousness, he met with his disciples and then traveled to find the lost tribes of Israel. His travels took him to Kashmir, where he lived to a ripe age of 120. He died in Kashmir and is buried in Srinagar, Kashmir.

The following books cover these topics:

Izala Auham—Removal of Doubts

Masih Hindustan Main—Jesus in India

Raz-i-Haqueeqat—Revealing the Truth

His book *Jesus in India* might be considered a summa theology about Jesus' life and death, covering a variety of evidence from the Bible, Qur'an, Buddhist literature, and historical literature as well as the geographical route of Jesus from Jerusalem to Kashmir, the habits and habitat of the lost tribes of Israelites who migrated to this area, and finally the actual tomb of Jesus in Srinagar, Kashmir. Several Christian scholars of modern age have cited this book as a source of information. Several scholars have written reviews of *Hadhrat Ahmad's* book. The following is a partial list of these scholars as well and one representative scholarly excerpt.

Dr. Paul C. Pappas, United States

Dr. James Deardorff, United States

Per Beskew, Norway

Michael Baigent, England

Robert M. Price, United States

Holger Kersten, Germany

Aziz Kashmiri, India

Dr. James Deardorff, in his recent book entitled *Jesus in India* writes:

“The Ahmadiyya’s most valuable research in my opinion has been in pointing out numerous clues indicating that Jesus, his mother Mary, and one or two others traveled through Syria and on East to Kashmir and India, and that Jesus’ final grave is in Kashmir.”⁴

The passion narrative contains numerous testimonies that point out that Jesus survived the crucifixion. Following the sequence of *Hadhrat Ahmad’s* book, we present below details from each testimony as well as corroborative scholarly evidence derived from the texts of the passion narratives.

Testimony One

One of the most convincing testimonies we gather from the New Testament is Jesus’ narrative about the need to show a sign for his veracity. We read in Matthew:

“Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered saying, Master we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of Prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of earth.’”⁵

To clarify the sign further, let us review the Book of Jonah. We read:

“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly and said, ‘I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice’... And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”⁶

From the foregoing verse, it follows that:

Jesus will show the Sign of Prophet Jonas.

The sign of Prophet Jonas was that he was swallowed by a whale and he remained in its belly for three days and three nights alive.

Jonas prayed to God from the whale's belly confirming that he was alive in the whale's belly. God heard his prayers and ordered the fish to vomit Jonas upon a dry land.

The fish vomited Jonah upon a dry land; hence he came alive from the whale's belly.

Afterwards, he traveled to his nation and preached God's words. His people accepted him as the Prophet of God.

Hadhrat Ahmad, citing the above mentioned testimony from Matthew, writes:

"Matthew (Chapter 12 verse 40) says that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of fish, so the son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth. Now it is clear that Jonah did not die in the belly of the fish; the utmost that happened that he was in a swoon for a fit of fainting. The holy books of God bear witness that Jonah, by the Grace of God, remained alive in the belly of fish, and came out alive, and his people ultimately accepted him. If then Jesus had died in the belly of fish, what resemblance could there be between a dead man and the one who was alive, and how could a living be compared with one dead?"⁷

Modern scholars have also reviewed this sign and have arrived at the same conclusion as has been deduced by *Hadhrat Ahmad* in his book.

German theologian Holger Kersten, in his book Jesus Lived In India, affirms that Jesus survived the crucifixion ordeal and traveled to India in search of the lost tribes of Israelites. About the sign of Jonah, he writes:

"One or two passages of the Gospels seem also to confirm Jesus' survival of the Crucifixion. Jesus made a statement comparing himself to Jonah, who had survived being ingested into the belly of whale and had then reappeared. If Jesus had been lying dead in his sepulcher, there would be no parallels to be drawn between the two.

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of earth. (Mat. 12:39-40)."⁸

Dr. James Deardorff, Professor Emeritus at Oregon State University, interprets the Sign of Jonah to be a clear proof that Jesus survived crucifixion. He writes:

"Jesus' mention of the sign of Jonah is said to have survived three days and nights inside the 'big fish'. He did not die therein and then undergo resurrection. It must be noted that if the present interpretation is correct, and if clear quotations from Jesus on this existed within a source document, the later would have been edited or redacted as necessary to remove any offensive or heretical statements. It is then quite plausible that Jesus had spoken more clearly as to the meaning of the Sign of Jonah than what endures within the Gospels, and that he had alluded to Jonah having survived three days and nights in the belly of fish and then having emerged alive."⁹

Dr. James Deardorff studied the document *The Talmud of Immanuel*, which was discovered in 1963 from Jerusalem and is still in its original Aramaic language. It has been translated into German and English and has been compared with the King James Version (KJV) of Matthew. James Deardorff proves that the current version of Matthew is derived from the original Aramaic documents. In the English translation of this Talmud, Matthew 16:5 has been compared with the KJV of Matthew 16:5. The comparison as described by James Deardorff is presented below:

Mt 16:4 "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So he left them and departed.

Talmud 18:5 "This wicked and unfaithful generation is seeking a sign; no sign shall be given to it except for the sign of Jonah, who disappeared alive into the belly of the fish, dwelled alive in its belly and emerged alive again into the light."

Matthew's lack of any explanation here about the sign of Jonah is not very plausible unless the questioners were the very same ones as in Mt 12:38 when they supposedly asked the same question and did receive an answer. If this was the case, however, it does not seem tenable for the questioners to repeat the same question. But in the Talmudic version, the sign of Jonah is explained. The emphasis is upon Jonah staying alive, there being no mention of the duration of three days and nights. Indeed, the fact that Jonah survived his ordeal within the "big fish" is the most remarkable thing about it; the length of his ordeal is secondary. The Talmudic version's prophecy of three days and nights in the tomb occurs in two places, one having a faint Matthean cognate (Mt 21:39).¹⁰

This explanation shows that the discovered Aramaic scrolls carried broader details of the sign of Jonah and its real import than has been recorded by Matthew. The 1963-discovered scrolls, therefore, support the arguments presented above for Jesus' survival from the cross.

Mark Mason, a Christian concerned with the intellectual trauma faced by Christianity, agrees with Kersten's view of Jesus traveling to India after crucifixion. In his book *In Search of the Loving God*, he remarks:

"It is also worth noting that Jesus said that there would be no miraculous sign to demonstrate his authority, except the sign of Prophet Jonah: 'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40)'. And Jonah did not die inside his fish before he emerged. Jesus may have visited India, and he may even have returned there after his Crucifixion."¹¹

Dr. Paul C. Pappas, Professor of History at Virginia Institute of Technology, reviewed *Hadhrat Ahmad's* book *Jesus in India* and agreed with a number of arguments presented therein. Commenting on the Sign of Jonah as the argument for Jesus' survival from the Cross, he writes:

"The Ahmadis have relied on western biblical scholarship and on eastern tradition, not just divine revelation, to prove that Jesus undoubtedly survived the

cross, recovered from his wounds, and went on to the East to settle in Kashmir in northern India. Since they accept Jesus as prophet, as all Muslims do, they indicate that Jesus prophesied in Matthew (12:38-40) to the Scribes and Pharisees, who asked for a sign from him, that there would be no sign, but that, just as the prophet Jonas spent three days and nights in whale's belly, so would the Son of man be for three days and three nights in the hearth of the earth. The Ahmadis interpret this to mean that Jesus would enter the earth alive and come out alive. He would not die. Therefore, they assert that Jesus, who remained crucified for only three to six hours at the most, could not have died. They correctly assert that, in the past, individuals remained on the Cross for as long as six days before dying from the exposure of the weather, exhaustion and suffocation, thirst and hunger, and attacks of wild beast and world of prey."¹²

Testimony Two

God bestows the power of prayer to His divine messengers. It is traditionally understood that the prayers of divine messengers are always accepted by God. Before the event of the crucifixion, Jesus, too, indulged in prayers, and according to scriptures, his prayers were accepted by God. *Hadhrat Ahmad* references Jesus' prayers on the cross as proof of Jesus' survival from the cross. He writes:

"Among the testimonies which show that Jesus was saved from the Cross is the one narrated in Matthew 26 verses 36-46, which relate that after getting information, through revelation, of his impending arrest, Jesus prayed to God all night on his face, and in tears, and such prayers offered with such humility, and for which Jesus had ample time, could not go unaccepted; for the cry of an elect of God, addressed at a time of distress, is never turned down. How was it then, that the prayers of Jesus which he had addressed all night with a painful heart and in a state of distress was rejected?"¹³

Jesus' prayers were certainly accepted, and God saved him from this shameful death on the cross. This has also been cited as a positive

argument for Jesus' survival from the Cross by various scholars. A few examples are presented below:

Robert M. Price, Professor at the Center for Inquiry Institute, Johannic Coleman Theological Seminary, is a reputed lecturer and debater at the Campus Free Thought alliance. In his recent work The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man, he cites *Hadhrat Ahmad's* view about Jesus' survival from crucifixion and references the special prayers of Jesus. He writes:

"The most modest of these held that Jesus had been crucified but survived it and lived to teach again, outside Israel, a doctrine taught by the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam.⁶ Is there any possible basis for such a view in Gospels? I believe there is."¹⁴

The author then continues to explore the clues and cites the prayers of Jesus at Gethsemane as an important clue that points out to the fact that Jesus must have survived the Cross. He writes:

"The Gethsemane prayer of Jesus is a request for God to allow Jesus to avoid the Socratic cup of martyrdom, reminding God (and the reader) that God is not bound to any plan; all things are possible for him. The fact that Jesus is humbly willing to accede to God's will, even should it entail death, does not need to mean that Jesus will necessarily die after all. In fact, it might well be intended as evidence of the very filial piety of Jesus that persuaded the Father to grant his request, even as Heb 5:7 says: 'In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his Godly fear.' It had been the same with Abraham; once he had proven his obedient willingness to kill his son. God rescinded the order that he do so."¹⁵

In short, the ardent prayers of Jesus to save himself from the cross were favorably heard, and God designed the events to take such a shape as would result in Jesus's survival from the Cross.

Testimony Three

Among the various proofs cited to suggest Jesus' survival from crucifixion was his short duration on the cross. Crucifixion was a long

and arduous process. The victim would spend at least three days nailed to the cross without food or water. If the victim would still survive, his legs would be broken, and excessive bleeding would result in death. No strangulation or head chopping was involved in the process of crucifixion. In case of Jesus, his stay on the cross was no more than three hours and his legs were not broken, a clear sign of survival on the cross. *Hadhrat Ahmad* explains this phenomenon thus:

“Reading the Gospel with care will show that Jesus did not remain on the Cross for three days, he did not have to suffer hunger or thirst for three days, nor were his bones broken. On the other hand, he remained on the Cross only for two hours, and the grace and mercy of God managed to bring about the crucifixion in the later part of the day, which was a Friday, only a little time before sunset, the next day being the Sabbath, the feast of the Jews. According to Jewish custom, it was unlawful and a punishable crime to let anyone remain on the cross on the Sabbath Day, or during the night previous to it.”¹⁶

Many scholars have expressed similar thoughts pertaining to Jesus’ short duration on the Cross as an indication of survival rather than death. The following excerpts are representative:

Frederick Strauss, in his book Life of Jesus (1835), asserts:

“The short time that Jesus hung on the Cross, together with the otherwise ascertained tardiness of death by Crucifixion, and the uncertain nature of the wound from the spear, appeared to render the reality of death doubtful.”¹⁷

William Stroud, in his book The Physical Cause of Death of Christ and its Relations to the Principles and Practices of Christianity (1871), writes:

“A fact of importance to be known, but which has not been sufficiently regarded, is that crucifixion was a very lingering punishment, and proved fatal not so much by loss of blood, since the wounds in the hands and feet did not lacerate any large vessels, and were nearly closed by the nails which produced them, by the slow process of

nervous irritation and exhaustion... but for persons to live two or more days on the cross was a common occurrence, and there are even instances of some who, having been taken down in time and really treated, recovered and survived.”¹⁸

Ernest Renan echoes similar thoughts in his book The Life of Jesus (1898) thus:

“It is evident, in fact, that doubts arose as to the reality of the death of Jesus. A few hours of suspension on the cross appeared to those accustomed to see crucifixion entirely insufficient to bring about such a result. They cited many instances of persons crucified, who had been removed in time and bring about such a result.”¹⁹

William Hannah, in his book The Life of Christ (1928), suggests:

“A victim almost always survived the first day, lived generally over the second day and occasionally even up to the fifth or sixth day.”²⁰

Paul C. Pappas commented on *Hadhrat Ahmad’s* thesis thus:

“Therefore they (Ahmedis) assert that Jesus, who remained crucified for only 3-6 hours at the most, could not have died. They correctly assert that, in the past, individuals remained on the cross for as long as six days before dyeing from exposure to the weather, exhaustion and suffocation, thirst and hunger, and attacks of wild beasts and birds of prey.”²¹

Testimony Four

In John 19:34, we read:

“But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs; but one of the soldiers pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”²²

When Jesus’ side was pierced, blood and water gushed out; this could only take place when the heart is still pumping. In a dead man, blood coagulates and cannot gush out or come forthwith, but rather must seep out. Jesus’ heart must have been still pumping after he was

removed from the cross; as such, he must have been alive after he was removed from the cross. *Hadhrat Ahmad* points out this medical fact, which has in turn been verified and endorsed by many esteemed doctors and scholars. A few representative excerpts follow:

Dr. Hugo Toll, an eminent medical authority in Sweden, states:

“If Jesus had been dead, no blood would have come.”²³

Holger Kersten remarks:

“This special emphasis so evidently put on testifying to the blood and water from Jesus’ side is actually intended to make it clear that Jesus was still alive.”²⁴

Andrea Faber Kaiser writes:

“If Jesus had been dead, only thick drops of blood would have passed from the wound”²⁵

Hugh Schonfield, in his bestseller The Passover Plot, writes:

“The reported emission of blood shows at least that life was still in him.”²⁶

Dr. W.B. Primrose, Senior Anesthesiologist of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, says:

“Judged by purely medical evidence provided in the Gospel accounts, it would appear that such evidence is not sufficient to pronounce (in the light of modern medical knowledge) with absolute certainty that Jesus was actually dead when his body was removed from the cross. This may seem to be a negative conclusion but it is of great importance in any interpretation of Resurrection appearances.”²⁷

Dr. Trevor Davies, former personal physician to the Queen of England and devout Christian, published his expert medical opinion in the *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians*. In this issue, Dr. Davies categorically concludes that Jesus could not have died while he was on the cross. Jesus was mistaken to have died because he lost his consciousness due to diminished blood supply to the brain. An excerpted portion of the article is below:

“At his crucifixion, Jesus was in shock and hypotensive, and lost consciousness because of diminished blood supply to the brain. His ashen skin and immobility were mistaken for death and there is no doubt that the bystanders believed he was dead. The cry (and there is little agreement about what may have been said) may not have been any more than a loud expiration preceding syncope. Oxygen supply to the brain remained minimal, but above a critical level, until the circulation was restored when he was taken down from the cross and laid on the ground. As Jesus showed signs of life he was not placed in a tomb (which may have been the intention to avoid burial rites on the Sabbath) but taken away and tended [to]...

The abuse meted out to Jesus in the Praetorium led to his collapse and early removal from the Cross, and to resuscitation. Individual and corporate suggestibility among the disciples and the women explains the reports of subsequent appearance. This hypothesis accepts the historical events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus but explains what happened in the light of modern knowledge. Faith does not require the abandonment of thoughts or assent to the concepts not scientifically acceptable. The church will be stronger if it accommodates proven knowledge with its creeds. If it does not, all that is left is blind belief, far beyond the credulity of most people.”²⁸

Dr. Davies's remarks are representative of the continuing suggestion among some devout Christians that Jesus survived crucifixion.

Testimony Five

Reading the four Gospels together as the Passion Narrative, it becomes obvious that Governor Pilate believed Jesus to be innocent and wanted to protect him from the agony of crucifixion; for this reason he devised a conscious plan that would ensure Jesus' release. *Hadhrat Ahmad* presented this hypothesis in Jesus in India thus:

“The gospels point out clearly that Pilate had several times resolved to let Jesus go, but the Jews said that if he would let him go he would be destroyed to Caesar; they also said that Jesus was a rebel who wished to be king.

And the dream which Pilate's wife had further prompted the freeing of Jesus; otherwise, Pilate and his wife themselves would have been exposed to disaster. But as the Jews were a mischievous people, ready even secretly to inform the Caesar of Pilate's action, Pilate made use of a device to rescue Jesus, first he fixed Friday for the crucifixion, only a few hours before sunset, and the night of great Sabbath was about to fall... Pilate knew very well that the Jews, in accordance with the commandments of their law, could keep Jesus on the cross only till the evening, and after that it was unlawful to keep anybody on the cross. Accordingly, it all happened in this very manner and Jesus was taken down from the cross before it was evening.”²⁹

In the above passage, *Hadhrat Ahmad* deduced the following:

- a. Pilate's attitude toward Jesus was favorable, and Pilate wanted to release him.
- b. The dream of Pilate's wife also strengthened Pilate's view about releasing Jesus.
- c. Pilate devised a strategy to undertake this objective by fixing Friday afternoon for the execution, as it would ensure a very short stay on the cross, quite insufficient for anyone's death.
- d. Jesus was taken down from the cross before it was evening.
- e. As the thieves remained alive, and as the duration of their stay on the cross was the same as Jesus', Jesus must have also stayed alive on the cross.

Several western scholars have also independently made the same deductions from the Bible. A few of their excerpts are presented below:

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln in their international bestseller express the same view about Pilate and about the short interval of Jesus on the cross. They write:

“Whatever his motivation, there is in any case, no question that Pilate is somehow intimately involved in the affair. He acknowledges Jesus' claim as ‘King of the Jews.’ He also expresses, or feigns to express, surprise that

Jesus' death occurs as quickly as it apparently does. And most important of all, he grants Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea. According to Roman law at the time a crucified man was denied all burial. Indeed, guards were customarily posted to prevent relatives or friends from removing the bodies of the dead. The victim would simply be left on the cross, at the mercy of elements and carrion birds. Yet Pilate, in a flagrant breach of procedure, readily grants Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea. This clearly attests to some complicity on Pilate's part. And it may attest to other things as well." ³⁰

Ernest Renan, in his book Life of Jesus Christ, shares this view:

"Pilate then would have liked to save Jesus... According to a tradition, Jesus found a supporter in the wife of the Procurator himself... and the idea that blood of this beautiful young man was about to be spilt, weighed upon her mind. Certain it is that Jesus found Pilate prepossessed in his favor. The Governor questioned him with kindness, and with the desire to find an excuse for sending him away pardoned." ³¹

Andrea Faber-Kaiser, in his book Jesus Died in Kashmir, includes a copy of Pilate's letter to Tiberius and confirms *Hadhrat Ahmad's* argument that Pilate wanted to save Jesus. He writes:

"An interesting light on Pilate's opinions about Christ is provided by a letter that he wrote to Tiberius Caesar in 32 A.D... A young man appeared in Galilee, in the name of God who sent him, preached a new law, humility. At first I thought that his intention was to stir up a revolt among the people against the Romans. My suspicions were soon dispelled. Jesus of Nazareth spoke more as friend of the Romans than as the friend of the Jews." ³²

He further asserts:

"... his [Pilate] only option was to carry out the execution in such a way that Jesus might survive it, unknown to his enemies. In this context it is particularly interesting that he arranged the crucifixion for shortly before the commencement of Jewish Sabbath—sunset on

Friday—as, under the Jewish law, criminals could not be left hanging after the Sabbath had begun.”

Testimony Six

After Jesus’ removal from the Cross, he was put in a sepulcher and was attended by Joseph of Arimathea and a physician named Nicodemus. This medical help is also recorded in the Bible. A special ointment was prepared for the treatment of Jesus’ wounds later referred to as the “Ointment of Jesus.” *Hadhrat Ahmad* describes at length the historical origin and various ingredients of this ointment in a separate chapter in Jesus in India. This product is still continuously used by many as a daily prescription in herbal medicines. Some western scholars have also discussed the use of the ointment.

Holger Kersten, in the chapter entitled ‘The Mysterious Aromatic Substances’ in his book Jesus Lived in India, writes:

“Both substances aloes and Myrrh, were commonly used in the treatment of large areas of injured tissue because they could easily be compounded as ointments and tinctures. Some specialists claim that the Jews often mixed Myrrh with ladanum, the resin of the rock rose (*Cistus* species, not to be confused with the opiate ladanum). This was specially used for plasters and bandages. It is evident that such mixtures represented the universally trusted means of achieving the most rapid and effective healing of wounds, combined with the greatest possible protection against infection at the time of Jesus. There can be no doubt that Nicodemus procured a truly amazing quantity of highly specific medicinal herbs for the sole purpose of treating the wounds of Jesus’ body. Such spices could have had no other function.”³³

An eyewitness report narrates the following:

“After this they hurried to the cross, and, according to the prescriptions of medical art, they slowly untied his hands, drew the spikes out of his hands, and with great care laid him on the ground. Thereupon, Nicodemus spread strong spices and healing salves on long pieces of ‘byssus’ which he had brought, and whose use was known

only in our order... These spices and salves had great healing powers, and were used by our Esscene Brethren who knew the rules of medical science for the restoration to consciousness of those in a state of death-like fainting. And even as Joseph and Nicodemus were bending over his face their tears fell upon him, they blew into him their own breath, and warmed his temples.”³⁴

Hugh Schonfield describes this entire story of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as part of a well-planned strategy to save Jesus. He writes:

“Two things, however, were indispensable to the success of a rescue operation. The first was to administer a drug to Jesus on the Cross to give the impression of premature death, and the second was to obtain the speedy delivery of the body to Joseph... If we allow that the story of Joseph going to Pilate is trustworthy, then with the help of common factors in traditions we can attempt to reconstruct what happened. Considerations of safety and secrecy have dictated that as few people as possible should be in the know or involved, and these would not have included any of the apostles, to whom Jesus never seems to have confided his plans as we have already noticed on several occasions... The first stage of the present action was the cross. We are told that there were bystanders there, and that one of them saturated a sponge with vinegar, impaled it on a cane and put it to the mouth of Jesus... Mark gives no reason for his action, but the Fourth Gospel says that Jesus called out, ‘I am thirsty,’ which could have been a signal. There was nothing unusual for a vessel containing a refreshing liquid to be at the place of execution, and it presented no problem to doctor the drink that was offered to Jesus. The plan may indeed have been suggested to Jesus by the prophetic words, ‘They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.’ If what he received had been the normal wine vinegar diluted with water the affect would have been stimulating. In this case it was exactly opposite. Jesus lapsed quickly into complete unconsciousness. His body sagged. His head lolled on his breast, and to all intents and

purposes he was a dead man. Directly it was seen that the drug had worked. The man hastened to Joseph who was anxiously waiting for the news. At once he sought an audience with Pilate, to whom he would have ready access as a member of the Sanhedrin, and requested to have the body of Jesus. Pilate was greatly astonished, as well he might be, to hear that Jesus was already dead, and being on his guard in view of all that had happened, he sent for the Centurion in charge of the execution to obtain confirmation. When this was forthcoming, he readily gave the necessary permission. It has been noted by scholars that Joseph asked for the body (soma) of Jesus, which could indicate that he did not think of him as dead. It is only Pilate who refers to the corpse (ptoma).¹⁰

Joseph hurried to Golgotha with clean linen and spices. The Fourth Gospel says he was accompanied by Nicodemus... The reported emission of blood shows at least that life was still in him. As arranged, Jesus was conveyed carefully to the nearby tomb... Jesus lay in the tomb over the Sabbath. He would not regain consciousness for many hours, and in the meantime the spices and linen bandages provided the best dressing for his injuries.”³⁵

Testimony Seven

What happened to Jesus after he regained his consciousness? This has also been clouded by the tales of resurrection and physical ascension. The latter will be covered in the next chapters. At the moment, we examine here the post-crucifixion activities of Jesus as have been reported in the Passion narrative. As has been proved, Jesus survived the ordeal of crucifixion. Consistent with the Sign of Jonah, it becomes evident that Jesus would proceed to his nation and complete his mission. He himself declared his mission in these words: “I have been sent to the lost sheep of Israelites.” These tribes were scattered in the northeastern areas towards Afghanistan and India. *Hadhrrat Ahmad* has captured the words of Jesus and traced his journey east. He writes:

“There is a statement of Jesus: ‘But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee’ (Matt 26:32). This verse clearly shows that Jesus, after he had come out of the

tomb, went to Galilee and not to heaven... The gospel of St. Mark says that after coming out of the tomb he was seen going on the road to Galilee, and ultimately he met 11 disciples when they were at their meal; he showed them his hands and feet which were wounded and they thought that he was perhaps a spirit. Then he said to them: 'Behold my hands and feet, that I am myself, handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.' He took from them boiled fish and a piece of honeycomb and ate in their presence. These verses show that it is certain that Jesus never went to heaven; rather coming out of the tomb, he went to Galilee; like an ordinary man, in normal clothes, with a human body. If he had been resurrected after death, how was it that this body of spirit could still have borne wounds inflicted upon him on the cross? What need had he to eat? And if he required food then, he must be in need of food now."³⁶

Several scholars, including historians, anthropologists, archeologists, and scientists, have studied post-crucifixion appearances and concluded that Jesus, after coming out of the tomb and staying a brief period with his disciples, underwent long journeys in search of the lost tribes of Israelites. A few excerpts of these findings are presented below:

Andrea Faber-Kaiser writes:

"Jesus then set out on a sixty mile journey to Galilee. Subsequently, on a number of occasions, he appeared to his disciples; but he always did so in a place where they were not likely to be observed. All this suggests that Jesus continued as a human being, and that he took pains to avoid discovery and arrest: What other evidence is there that Jesus had not become a spirit? The clearest indication is provided by Luke 24:36-39, 'And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be upon you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, 'Why are ye trouble and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands, and my feet that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath no flesh and bones as ye see me have.' Two verses further

on, Jesus suddenly shows himself to be hungry -- something quite inconceivable in a Divine or spiritual being.”³⁷

Holger Kersten commenting on the same verses, Luke 24:38-43, writes:

“Jesus is keen to demonstrate to his followers that his body is quite earthly in nature, just it had been before. He stresses his physical presence by allowing them to touch him, and by eating food, and tells them plainly that he is no ghost. To prove that his body has not been ‘transformed’ in any way, he also shows the marks of his wounds and even asks doubting Thomas to touch the wound in his side with his hand. Later he revealed himself to the eleven as they were sitting at the table, and criticized their lack of faith and their obduracy in not believing those who had seen him after his rising again (Mark 16:14). That Jesus was there in person was the result of no administrative error, no trickery, no illusion; his body is as human as theirs, neither transfigured, nor that an astral projection or ghost that is the message he tries to get the disciples to take in.”³⁸

Ernest B. Docker, in his book If Jesus Did Not Die on the Cross, writes:

“If it is true that he asked Thomas to put his finger in the print of his nails; if it is true that he said to his doubting disciples, ‘Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me, and see; for a spirit hath no flesh and bones as ye see me have; if it is true that he ate in presence of disciples; if it is true that he disguised himself as a Gardner after leaving the sepulcher; if it is true that he walked the whole distance from Jerusalem to Galilee on foot; it follows clearly as day follows the night that the statement that he appeared suddenly in rooms whose doors were shut is not true in its literal sense and that his body was not an astral body, but a body made up of flesh and bones.”³⁹

James Deardorff, in his book Jesus in India, also affirms this line of reasoning. He writes:

“In the Lucan account, Jesus is portrayed as being hungry and eating a piece of fish in front of the disciples (Luke 24:4-43). This behavior is not suggestive of a resurrected body whose cells are no longer subject to growth, subdivision, aging and death.”⁴⁰

Testimony Eight

Coming back to Jesus' journey post-crucifixion, *Hadhrat Ahmad* writes:

“In the parable he had also hinted he would come out of the bowels of earth and then would join the people and like Jonah, would be honored by them. So this prophecy too was fulfilled, for Jesus coming out of the bowels of the earth, went to his tribes who lived in the eastern countries, Kashmir and Tibet etc., Viz. the ten tribes of Israelites who 721 years before Jesus, had been taken prisoner from Samaria by Shalmeneser, King of Assur, and had been taken away by him. Ultimately these tribes came to India and settled in various parts of that country. Jesus, at all events must have made this Journey, for the Divine object underlying his advent was that he should meet the lost Jews who had settled in different parts of India; the reason being that these in fact were the lost sheep of Israel who had given up even their ancestral faith in these countries, and most of whom had adopted Buddhism, relapsing gradually to idolatry. Dr. Bernier, on the authority of a number of learned people states in his travels, that the Kashmiris in reality are Jews who in the time of dispersal in the days of King of Assur had migrated to this country.”⁴¹

From this passage, Jesus traveled to those countries where the ten lost tribes had their abode. The Kashmiris appear to be a part of those lost tribes pushed out beyond the Euphrates in the eighth century. This has been validated by modern research.

Grant R. Jefferey, in his book Apocalypse, quotes a Rabbi who points out the identity of the ten lost tribes of Israel thus:

“Rabbi Eliahu Amihail, in his book *The Ten lost Tribes in Assyria*, discussed in detail his research into the origins of the Pathan tribes of Afghanistan and Western Pakistan. These tribes are locally known as Pathans. While surrounded by diverse Asiatic peoples, they differ markedly in their characteristics from their Turkish, Mongolian, Persian and Indolranian neighbors. Incredibly these thirteen million Pathan tribesmen call themselves the “Sons of Israel”. Rabbi Avihail claims that these Pathans have both oral traditions and genealogical scrolls reaching back thousands of years that verify their connection with the ten tribes of Israel who were taken as captives to Assyria in 721 B.C.”⁴²

The Wall Street Journal (May 11, 1998) includes the following headline and excerpt:

“Seeking Lost tribes of Israel in India, Using DNA Testing; Messers Parfitt and Branman, with Q tips and Polaroid’s, Lure the Men of Alibag.” (Writer: Jonathan Karp)

“... South Asia is potential lost tribe heaven, Muslim Pathans in Afghanistan and Pakistan claim to be the descendents of King Saul and practice certain Jewish traditions, such as circumcising the newborn boys on the 8th day. Further east some Kashmiris believe Jesus died in the Himalayas while searching for the wandering Israelites.”⁴³

Sir Thomas Haddish, in his book *The Gates of India*, writes:

“But there is one important people (of whom there is much more to be said) who call themselves Bani Israel, who claim a descent from Cush and Ham, who have adopted a strange mixture of Mosaic law in ordinances in their moral code, who (sometimes at least) keep a feast which strongly accords with the Passover, who hate the Yahudi (Jew) with a traditional hatred, and for whom no one yet has been able to suggest any other origin than the one they claim, and claim with a determined force, and

these people are the overwhelming inhabitants of Afghanistan and Kashmir.”⁴⁴

Regarding the travels of Jesus Christ and his mother Mary towards Asia, two Western scholars have quoted a Qur’anic verse and expressed its veracity through their own findings.

In Jesus in India, Holger Kersten writes:

“The Koran also does not neglect to provide an answer to the question of where Jesus went after the Crucifixion: ‘We made son of Mary and his mother a sign to mankind and gave them shelter on a peaceful hillside watered by a fresh spring’ (Koran 23:51). How well this description of the place of refuge applies to Kashmir is absolutely astonishing. In another translation, the place in the mountains is even called a ‘green valley.’”⁴⁵

James W. Deardorff, in his book Jesus in India, writes:

“There is a tradition preserved within the Qur’an that also is consistent with Mary, along with Jesus, having made it as far as the mountainous regions of northern Afghanistan and Pakistan, if not Kashmir. Surah 23:50 reads: ‘And we made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother a sign, and We gave them a shelter on a lofty ground having meadows and springs.’ Although the context of this saying is not clear, nor what the sign may have been, it clearly does pertain to Isa (Jesus) and implies a location well removed from Israel, which is not noted for lofty ground with meadows and springs. Thus it implies an alpine scene experienced some time after crucifixion.”⁴⁶

Ahmadiyya Muslim Belief

The Holy Qur’an declared that Jesus did not die on the Cross. Jews did not accept Jesus as the true Messenger and wanted to crucify him because it was written in the Old Testament that whosoever is killed on the cross is accursed. Jews, by so doing, wanted to prove that Jesus was accursed. On the contrary, God saved Jesus from this accursed death. Jesus was certainly placed on the cross, but he fainted. The Romans assumed he was dead and put him in sepulcher, where he was treated for his wounds and treated by a physician. He regained consciousness and came out of sepulcher and secretly met with his disciples, ate with

them, and then took a long journey in search of the lost tribes of Israel. *Hadhrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in his book *Jesus in India*, has showed the entire route of his journey from Jerusalem to Kashmir. In his book *Izaala Auhaam* ("Removal of Doubts and Myths"), *Hadhrat* Ahmad cites some thirty Qur'anic verses to prove that Jesus survived the crucifixion and died a natural death in Kashmir. One verse is quoted below:

"And their saying, 'We did kill the Messiah, Jesus Son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah'; whereas they slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it; they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty. On the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself. And Allah is Mighty, Wise" (4:158-159).

This verse clearly explains the Ahmadiyya Muslim belief. *Hadhrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad presented the final resting place of Jesus as evidence of Jesus' survival from the cross and his journey to India.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has attempted to illustrate how independent Western scholars have arrived at the same conclusions made by *Hadhrat* Ahmad in his book *Jesus in India* written in 1889. As the excerpts quoted above suggest, some of the scholars have endorsed outright *Hadhrat* Ahmad's conclusions; others have only verified and extended them, while still others have only acknowledged them as illustrative of the Eastern tradition.

In addition to the discovery of the tomb of Jesus, many new discoveries have been made including the Dead Sea Scrolls and Shroud of Turin as well as attempts made to perform DNA testing from the graves of Mary and Jesus. These will be covered in the next chapter.

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Additional Evidence for Jesus' Survival from the Cross

Many new pieces of evidence have been discovered in the last few decades; their close study additionally supports the view that Jesus survived the Crucifixion. The famous Shroud of Turin, the Dead Sea Scrolls and additional scientific experimentation on the material pieces collected, the geographical and archeological evidence describing the migration of Jesus to Kashmir, India and his final resting place in Srinagar, Kashmir collectively form the body of proof positive for Jesus' survival from the Cross.

Dead Sea Scrolls

Dr. Barbara Thiering, a biblical scholar and an authority on Dead Sea Scrolls, clearly affirms that Jesus Christ did not die on the Cross. In her book, 'Jesus and the Riddle of Dead Sea Scrolls,' she writes:

"Jesus did not die on the cross, He recovered from the effects of the poison, was helped to escape the tomb by friends, and stayed with them until he reached Rome, where he was present in A.D. 64. This is not a conjecture, but comes from a reading of the text by the peshet method"¹

Shroud of Turin:

Kurt Burna, in his startling work entitled: 'Christ did not perish on the Cross' presents an extensive work done on the Shroud of Turin. In this treatise, he explains what the Shroud proves thus:

"It reveals:

A stab from a lance but no injury to the heart

Evidence of activity of the heart during the removal of the body from the Cross and

Incontrovertible evidence of activity of the heart after the body had been removed from the cross and placed in a Shroud."²

Many further scientific tests were undertaken and, in 1988, as a result of a carbon dating experiment, Cardinal Anastasio Balestrero announced on September 28, 1988 that the results specified the interval of calibrated dates assigned to the fabric of the Shroud, with a degree of 95%, lies between A.D. 1260 and 1390.

Most recent research conducted by other scientists have already proved that the results of the carbon dating experiment are invalid because the fabric was contaminated with a plastic secreting bacteria covering the surface of the fabric. Hence, the carbon picked up was not what was picked up from the fabric, but was from the plastic secreted from the bacterial growth.

Dr. Leonacio A Garza Valdes, in his book The DNA of God writes:

"I knew the critical moment would be when I could examine a linen thread under the microscope to check for the presence of the bioplastic coating. So when Riggi removed a thread from the trimmed edge, I was nervous as I put it under the microscope. My nervousness did not last long; immediately I saw a bioplastic coating on the fibers. I quickly took the picture with the microscope camera and called to father Cervantes and to Riggi, 'It's there! There is a bioplastic coating. As well as some fungi, clear interference in the radioactive carbon dating.'"³

This shows that 1998 carbon dating experiment was invalid, thereby establishing that the Shroud of Turin could be the 'real' linen in which Jesus was wrapped at the time of burial.

Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad, the third successor of the Ahmadiyya Movement, addressed the 1978 International Conference on the Deliverance of Jesus from the Cross thus:

"Thus the Holy Shroud has not the character of a missing link, in the chain of evidence in support of the deliverance of Jesus from the Cross. If the shroud is a fabrication, the Christians are responsible for according undeserved reverence to it. If it is genuine, it is additional evidence in support of our thesis, and adds to our knowledge on the subject. But if it is not genuine, it does not in any way detract from the knowledge that we possess."⁴

**Suzanne Marie Olsson, US Researcher
seeks to exhume 'Christ' in Kashmir.**

This is the headline of a news story broadcasted from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. In the following, an excerpt from this news report is presented.

An American researcher who believes she has found the final resting place of Jesus Christ is campaigning to exhume a body at a Muslim shrine in Indian-administered Kashmir for scientific tests. NY based researcher Suzanne Marie Olsson is currently in Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital, studying the Muslim shrine of Rozabal. While Muslims say Rozabal houses the tomb of Yuza Asaf, a Muslim saint, many researchers believe it contains the body of Jesus Christ. To put an end to speculation, Ms Olsson has suggested exhuming the remains at Rozabal for DNA testing and carbon dating. "This will trace him to his origin ... and resolve the raging controversy over the identity of the place forever," she said. Ms Olsson has already dug up a shrine at the Murree hill station in Pakistan under the supervision of archaeologists Ahmad Hassan Dani and Saida Rahman. Murree is believed to be the resting place of Jesus' mother, Mary. "The exhumed remains have been sent for the DNA testing and the report



Mystery of the Tomb of Mary

Thousands of devotees across the world believe Mother Mary is buried in Murree. But nobody has ever tried to verify the claim.



Among the various, fascinating legends connected with the popular tourist resort of Murree, the self-styled 'Queen of the Hills' in Pakistan, is a unique tale about the tomb of Virgin Mary. Believe it or not but some claim that located on a peaceful Murree hilltop is the very site thought to be the final abode or resting place of the Mother of Jesus Christ, better known to Muslims as Hazrat Marium.

The site has been maintained and honoured as far back as anyone can remember. Its importance can be judged from the fact that the surrounding country is named after the supposed gravesite. According to legend, the name Murree' is derived from 'Marium' or Mary. Among locals it is known as Mai Mari da Asthan (Resting Place of Mother Mary). Indeed, when the British first arrived here in the 1850s, to establish a new hill-station in India, Murree was still known as Mari. The spelling was later changed to the present one in 1875. However, with the waves of time, the exact origin of the shrine has become obscure.

Since time immemorial, Hindus have worshipped it and the Muslims pay their homage on Thursdays by lighting earthen lamps filled with oil. Commanding, as one book puts it, "magnificent views over forest-clad hills into deep valleys, studded with villages and cultivated fields, with the snow-covered peaks of Kashmir in the background" and overlooking the plains of Punjab, it stood naturally eligible to be selected by the British for military purposes who built a watchtower at the site.

According to old gazetteer records: "In 1898, Richardson, the

Garrison Engineer, wished to demolish the tomb at the time of the construction of the defence tower. Shortly afterwards he died in an accident, and the locals connect the incident with his evil intentions towards the tomb." The grave was thereafter promptly repaired.

A little further down the ridge, the British built a convent and named it the Convent of Jesus and Mary. Today, it is one of the best girls' boarding schools in Pakistan. After partition the government of Pakistan procured this site from private landowners. This place was preferred due to its suitable elevation for the purpose of installation of TV transmitters. More recently in 1968, two towering antennas were added adjacent to one another on 'Pindi Point', which is the new name given to the location. One of them arises from the same place where Mary is believed to rest.

A crude looking cemented structure marks the spot nowadays where the alleged grave exists. The area is closed to general public due to security concerns for the safety of the TV boosters. Barbed wire surrounds the antennas to prevent anybody from getting near and civil guards keep a vigil on the installations night and day.

Various superstitions surround the story of the tomb. Local residents have reported occasional sightings of unexplained luminosities in the vicinity of the grave, at night. Others describe rare encounters with a ball of light condensing into a fuzzy apparition of a veiled female form. Most of the eyewitnesses questioned believed the images were genuine and are connected to the woman buried on the hilltop who many also regard as a saint.

Sometime back, a low-key investigation was carried out by a team of archaeologists, on duty from Islamabad. However, their findings, which were supposedly carried out to validate the tomb claim, were never made public.

Skeptics from the field argue that regardless of the outcome of the team's findings, it cannot be accepted as the final verdict on the issue. As an expert puts it, "While serious research of this nature requires extensive excavation, the visit by those

archaeologists in the past was merely a superficial survey." Amongst the Christians, there is a group that believes in a post-crucifixion life of Jesus Christ. They insist that Christ travelled to Kashmir with his mother where he died. They believe that Mother Mary was also laid to rest in the same region.

The Muslim view conflicts with the theory that Christ was crucified or that he ever died. Islam holds that Hazrat Isa ascended into the heavens by Divine command. Nevertheless, many Muslim devotees do not rule out that Hazrat Marium may have been buried in Murree. They quote the following verse from the Holy Quran in order to substantiate their claim:

"And we made the son of Marium and his mother a sign, and we gave them shelter on a lofty ground having meadows and springs" [Surah: 23 Al-Mominoon (The Believers) Ayah 50]

They argue that the aforementioned scripture does not correspond to any landscape description in Bait-ul-Muqadas or Jerusalem. Furthermore, they point out that the mention of 'lofty ground' with 'meadows and springs' may perhaps be a reference to the place in question in Murree.

Uncertainty surrounds other 'Tombs of Mary' located around the world as well. One exists in Turkey. Others claim Mary was buried in France yet others say England was the place. Claims of similar nature and practice of 'tomb assignment' to persons of significant standing is not uncommon in our own regional belt. It is thought that Hazrat Musa or Moses is buried in Bandipore, Hazrat Haroon or Aaron, at Harwan, and Hazrat Suleman or Solomon at Takht-i-Suleman in Indian occupied Kashmir. Lately, there has been growing international interest in these tombs.

"I am only helping Kashmir," says Suzanne Marie Olsson, a New York based researcher, who is on a mission to find the truth, "if the authenticity of all the holy places in Kashmir is established, it will place Kashmir firmly on global map as a leading pilgrimage site of Christians and Muslims and you will have the pilgrim traffic from all over the world."

Ms Olsson's contention is equally relevant in the case of the mystery tomb in Murree. In the absence of historical records, one is forced to rely on local legend. If any connection with Mary can be established through scientific means then the ensuing benefits to the tourism industry can well be imagined.

Whilst many people remain doubtful of the claim of the tomb's existence, it is interesting to note that a section of Lahore's Badshahi mosque houses a collection of relics which are believed to belong to Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). These include, the Mue Mubarak or the Holy Hair, his turban and a cloak among various other items on display. Hundreds of local and foreign visitors queue up daily to view these relics and to pay homage without ever questioning their authenticity.

On the other hand, after undergoing extensive tests, most western scientists agree now that the famous Shroud of Turin, a woven cloth with an image of a man on it and widely rumoured for a long time to be that of Jesus Christ himself, appears to be a mediaeval art forgery more than anything else.

The unprecedented technological advances made in recent years in carbon isotope dating and DNA testing methods can investigate with reasonable accuracy similar claims.

In the interest of research, the gravesite should be opened for scientific study so that the issue may be resolved. Until then a question will always loom large over this riddle whether Virgin Mary is really buried in Murree.

It remains an unravelled mystery.

is awaited," she said. "Now Rozabal holds the key. If the remains there are sent for testing and then tallied with the results of the Murree project, it will either establish the link between the two shrines as being of similar origin and thus authenticate the Marium-Jesus theory or prove it wrong for good." However, her project has run into trouble with the managers of the Rozabal shrine, who are strongly opposed to its "desecration". "We will never allow it," said Mohammed Amin, one of the managers."⁵

Submitted by: Saddia Malik, Chandler, Arizona

Is Jesus Christ buried at Rozabal?, Moses at Bandipore, Haroun at Harwan and Solomon at Takht-i-Sulaiman?

Srinagar, Mar 9: Who is buried at the Rozabal shrine in downtown city? Jesus Christ? A researcher from New York is currently in Kashmir to find out who.

Her search does not stop there. Suzanne Marie Olsson claims Kashmir is dotted with the graves of holy prophets. She believes Moses (AS) is buried at Bandipore in the north, Hadhrat Haroun (AS) at Harwan and Solomon (AS) at Takht-i-Sulaiman here and Hadhrat Mariam at Murree in Pakistan. Local beliefs give credence to her contention.

"You have more Christian holy sites than even Egypt or Israel has", says Suzanne, presently here on a project to verify the authenticity of her belief that Jesus is entombed at Rozabal.

She has devoted her life to gathering archaeological evidences of the tombs of many prophets across the world. Moreover, she claims to be a direct descendant of the Christ and as such insists Jesus is her "grandfather".

Claims may be far-fetching and even unduly straining of the common man's credibility but the lady has a strictly no-nonsense approach towards her work and her "purely scientific objective". This is to exhume the remains of the holy saint at Rozabal, send these for DNA testing and carbon dating to "trace him to his origin".

"This will resolve the raging controversy over the identity of the place forever", claims Suzanne.

She claims to have already dug up a shrine at Murree in Pakistan under the supervision of the world renowned archaeologist Prof Emeritus Ahmad Hassan Dani and Saida Rahman director general archaeology and museums in Pakistan. The exhumed remains have been sent for the DNA testing and the report is awaited.

"Now Rozabal holds the key. If the remains there are sent for testing and then tallied with the results of the Murree project, it will either establish the link between the two shrines as being of similar origin and thus authenticate the Mariam-Jesus theory or prove it wrong for good", says Suzanne.

But here lies the rub. The project has run up against the firm opposition from the Intizammiya Committee of Rozabal who are dead against allowing any "digging up" to be done at the shrine. Not only because they revere the shrine as the tomb of the holy Muslim saint Yuza Asaf but also because exhuming the remains will be a "desecration" of the shrine.

"We will never allow it", said Muhammad Amin Ringshawl, the president of the Intizammiya Committee. Another reason cited for refusal is the Islamic belief that Jesus did not die on the Cross and was lifted to heaven by God while he was being taken to Crucifixion by the infidels. So even to think that Christ is buried in person somewhere is a sacrilege for a Muslim. But Suzanne is adamant and insists about the "purely scientific nature of her work " and her identity as a "seeker of truth". She pleads to be allowed to "verify the origin and the identity of the saint" so that she can put the wild speculations about the place to rest. She claims she has done similar work across the globe and exhumed the shrines even in Muslim countries like Egypt, latest being in Murree (Pakistan). She supports her claim by showing a photograph of the dug-up Murree shrine.

"I am only helping Kashmir. If the authenticity of all the holy places in Kashmir is established, it will place Kashmir firmly on global map as a leading pilgrimage site of Christians and Muslims and you will have the pilgrim traffic from all over the world", says Suzanne, disappointed over the Intizammiya Committee's "eleventh hour refusal to co-operate".

She has been here for the past six months and moved from pillar to post to get permission for her project, which includes some top officials like Shafi Shaida press secretary to chief minister. She has even written to Dr Farooq Abdullah and is still awaiting the answer. Suzanne hasn't lost hope. She is dead confident about her eventual success in getting the help of not only the official machinery but also the people for her "noble project".⁷

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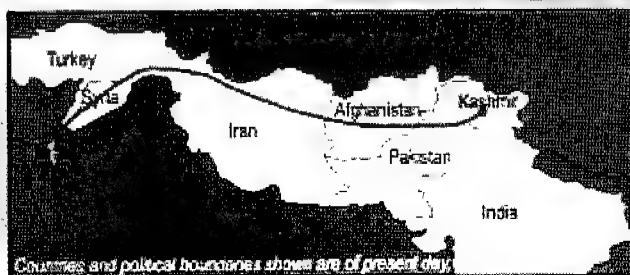
‘We made son of Mary and his mother a sign to mankind and gave them shelter on a peaceful hillside watered by a fresh spring’ (Koran 23:51).

Discovery of the Millennium

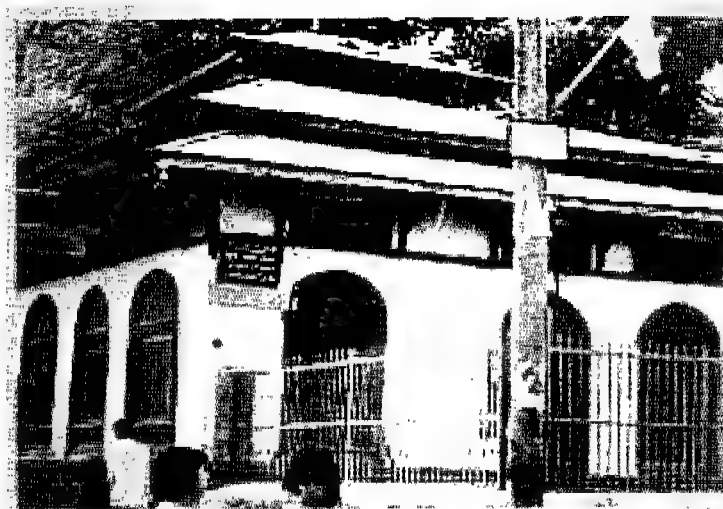
A Valley in Kashmir



Jesus' Approximate
Route To Kashmir



Route described by *Hadhrat Ahmad* (peace be on him)



The
Tomb
Of
Jesus
Christ
In
Kashmir

Tomb of Jesus in Srinagar, Kashmir, India

Resurrection

Traditional Christian belief states that Jesus died on the Cross, that he was buried, and that he rose up from death on the third day. This series of historic events demonstrate Christ's physical resurrection, a concept that became an important part of the Apostle's creed in the year A.D. 323. Not a single example of physical resurrection after death exists in the history of humankind save for that of Jesus; yet, it certainly boasts to be an integral part of Christian belief system for the past 2000 years. This contradiction between historical fact and religious belief begs the question: Did it actually happen? The proponents of Jesus' resurrection derive its origin from the Passion Narratives. But as we have seen in the previous chapter, the modern scholarly view on Jesus' death on the Cross has proven it to be a false doctrine. Likewise, resurrection is being questioned by the same set of scholars. These scholars view the concepts of Resurrection and Ascension to be a form of spiritual exaltation rather than a physical phenomenon. As one scholar put it, "We can either literalize the creeds and thereby become irrelevant, or we can abandon our creeds and become non-believers." There is, however, a moderate way between these two extremes—namely, to view the Bible and other religious texts as metaphoric in nature. In so doing, we may arrive at a more profound meaning to these expressions. The word of God could never be so simplistic as to be taken merely on a literal level? Several scholars have engaged in a close textual reading of the Bible in order to unlock its sublime meanings. Metaphoric language plays a significant role in other religions as well. A strictly literal interpretation of the Qur'an would risk missing the entire import of its words. Islam serves as a poignant point of comparison to Christianity because the Qur'anic perspective on metaphoric language anticipates the views articulated by contemporary scholars of Christianity—namely, that there is no physical resurrection from death to life, nor is there a physical ascension of Jesus as has been believed for centuries. God truly exalted Jesus by saving his life from the accursed death. He heard Jesus' prayers and enabled him to fulfill his mission to meet with the lost tribes. The similarities between these two perspectives provide hope for eliminating the distance between the two great nations of Christianity and Islam.

Traditional Belief:

Jesus died on the Cross, he was buried, after three days, he rose up from the dead into physical life.

Contemporary View:

There was no physical resurrection from the state of being dead into a state of being alive. Resurrection connotes spiritual meaning of exaltation.

The entire Easter story in Christianity is based on the physical resurrection. The proponents of this concept would make us believe that Jesus conquered death and regained into life after death. This victory over death is the single most special event in the history of mankind. This concept has been extensively propagated by the entire Evangelic Clergy. Modern Christian scholars, however, after their extensive research on all the passages of the Gospels, conclusively prove that no such physical phenomenon took place. There lies a deeper message in these passages—that of exaltation and spiritual progress. A few excerpts are presented below:

Bishop **John Shelby Spong**, in his book Resurrection—Myth or Reality writes:

“Our eyes have been shaped for so long by the Gospels that even when we are reading Paul’s words, Gospel concepts dramatically distort our understanding of what Paul actually wrote. There is no sense at all in Paul of a physical resurrection of Jesus back into the life of this world. God did not, for this Apostle, raise Jesus from grave back to the life on this earth. Rather, for Paul God raised Jesus from death into God’s presence; from grave to God’s right hand.¹

The Bishop of Durham, **Dr. David Jenkins**, denies physical resurrection:

“In an interview conducted by Clive Calver, director of Evangelical Alliance, which claims to represent more than a million Churchgoers, the bishop said: ‘The more I am involved in this, the less I think that anything that might be called ‘physical reconstruction’ or ‘resurrection’ took place.”² (*The Independent*, March 30, 1992)

The proponents of bodily resurrection present the following passage to support their point of view, as it is stated in 1 Corinthians 15:

“For I handed on to you as of the first importance what in turn I have received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”³

Interestingly enough, we read further in the same chapter:

“But someone will ask, “How are dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? ... If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body... What am I saying, brothers and sisters, is this, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God...? 1 Cor. 15:35-50⁴

This passage clarifies the difference between the physical and the spiritual body, and as per Paul, the physical body can not inherit the kingdom of God. It is the spiritual body that can enjoy the Kingdom of God. This is what exaltation means. Why then is there insistence on the part of clergy and the Church to convince us of the bodily resurrection?

Russel Shorto, in his book Gospel Truth describes the political reasoning of promoting bodily resurrection as extended by Professor Pagels of Princeton University. He writes:

“Besides its religious significance, Pagels wrote, “the doctrine of bodily resurrection also serves an essential political function: it legitimizes the authority of certain men who claim to exercise exclusive leadership over the churches as successors of the Apostle Peter.”⁵

Dr. Gunther Schwartz, a renowned German Linguist and theologian, using his linguistic knowledge and skills has uncovered an interesting feature of the resurrection story as was originally recorded in Aramaic and then its Greek translation. He writes:

“The linguistic evidence is conclusive, not ‘resurrection’ but ‘resuscitation’ is the only meaning possible for both these Aramaic words, one of which Jesus would have used. I am referring to the synonymous words

achajuta and techijuta. Both nouns are derived from the verb chaja ‘to live’, and consequently mean—I repeat ‘resuscitation’ and nothing else.”⁶

A famous saying reminds us that translation is never complete. May we add here that in translation the real import of the words could be minimized or lost. The Aramaic and Greek words, when translated, altered resuscitation to resurrection. In the last chapter we noticed that Joseph of Aramitheia asked for the soma or living body of Jesus and it was changed to *ptoma* or corpse.

Holger Kersten presented a scenario of the entire resurrection, step by step. Then, referring to the above linguistic discovery, he writes:

“This discovery is quite sensational and at once lends a meaning to the biblical texts that is in perfect agreement with our analysis so far... The curt query by the white-robed men in the Luke, asking why they seek a living person among the dead (24:5) is as clear as can be. Jesus lives, he is rescued, he has no business with a tomb anymore, the living belong among the living. He had gone ahead to Galilee, where his followers could see him again.

We have already seen how Jesus had great difficulty convincing the disciples of his presence in flesh. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the majority of the disciples had not been told about the resuscitation attempt, and so were convinced they were looking at a reanimated corpse or a ghost. And secondly, the supposed death by crucifixion of Jesus marks the point at which history ends and Christian theology (the doctrine of Resurrection) begins Jesus’ life as a human individual comes to a close at this point, and replacing it, the story of Christ—the mythically glorified Reality—commences.”⁷

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, in their international bestseller, Holy Blood, Holy Grail discuss the secrets that the Church wanted to hide from the public. They give the example of the last portion of the Gospel of Mark and then later remark in the same chapter:

“Christianity as it evolves through its early centuries and eventually comes down to us today, is a product of the

‘adherents to the message’. The course of its development and spread has been too widely charted by other scholars to necessitate much attention here. Suffice it to say that with St. Paul ‘the message’ had already begun to assume a crystallized and definitive form, and this form became the basis on which the whole theological edifice of Christianity was erected... The new religion was oriented primarily toward a Roman or Romanized audience. Thus the role of Rome in Jesus’ death, was, of necessity, whitewashed, and the guilt was transferred to the Jews. But this was not the only liberty taken with events to render them palatable to the Roman world. For the Roman world was accustomed to deifying its rulers, and Caesar had already been officially instated as a god. In order to complete, Jesus—whom nobody previously deemed divine—had to be deified as well. In Paul’s hands he was... The new god, in short, had to be comparable in power, in majesty, in repertoire of miracles, to those he was intending to displace... It was at this point that the idea of Resurrection first assumed such crucial importance, and for a fairly obvious reason—to place Jesus on par with Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, Orisis, and all other dying and reviving Gods who populated both the world and the consciousness of their time... And the Easter festival—the festival of death and resurrection—was made to coincide with cults and mystery schools.”⁸

Paul C. Pappas, in his book Jesus’ Tomb in India, elaborates the debate on the bodily resurrection of Jesus and writes:

“... There have been at least three different scholarly interpretations of Jesus’ resurrection. The first contends that Jesus did not die on the cross, but was hurriedly taken down and placed in the tomb, where he was revived during the night. After he was left alone, he became strong enough to roll away the stone blocking the entrance and to tell the women who came in the dark to embalm him that he would meet his disciples in Galilee. At Galilee, he bade his disciples farewell and died on the lone hilltop where he took leave of them. A second interpretation maintains that

Jesus survived death and went far away from Palestine; and a third, that Peter was so emotionally distraught that he had a hallucination and thought he actually saw Jesus. He convinced other disciples of this, but did not have any subsequent hallucinations.”⁹

In short, the above perspectives of various scholars clearly negate any physical resurrection of Jesus from death to life. Jesus, in reality, became unconscious at the cross, he was then placed in a tomb, treated with myrrh and aloes and spices by Nicodemus, a physician, with the help of Joseph of Arimathea. This treatment, in turn, resulted in his gaining consciousness that was mistaken for resurrection. Afterwards, he walked out from the tomb and met with his disciples. Later he took a long journey eastward in search of the lost tribes of Israel.

Islamic Perspective:

In Islam, resurrection is a certainty; when all the dead will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. This will take place only when we are faced with accountability in the presence of God. A human being, upon dying, cannot and never will return to this world. Many verses of Holy Qur'an attest to this doctrine. A few of them are cited below:

“And it is inviolable law for a township which we have destroyed that they shall not return.” 21:96

“That I may do the righteous deeds in the life that I have left behind.” Never, it is but a word that he utters. And behind them is a barrier until the day when they shall be raised again.” 23:101

“Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed before them, and that they never return to them?” 36:32

“And Allah takes away the souls of human beings at the time of their death; and during their sleep of those also that are not yet dead. And then He retains those against which He has decreed death and sends back the others till an appointed term. In that are Signs for a people who reflect.” 39:43

There is, however, another type of resurrection—*spiritual* resurrection. The following verses of Holy Qur'an describe this phenomenon:

"Then We raised you up after your death, that you might be grateful." 2:57

"And remember when Abraham said, 'My Lord' show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He said, 'Hast thou not believed!' He said, 'Yes, but I ask this that my heart may be at rest. He answered, 'Take four birds and make them attached to thyself. Then put each of them on a hill; then call them; they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is mighty and Wise.'" 2:261

"O ye who believe! Respond to Allah, and the Messenger when he calls you that he may give you life." 8:25

"Look therefore at the marks of Allah's mercy; how He quickens the earth after the death. Verily the same God will quicken the dead. For He has power over all things." 30:51

With respect to Jesus, Holy Qur'an states that Allah exalted him in the spiritual rank. This has been dealt with in the preceding chapter. In the following, a table with comparative beliefs is presented for all Christians who would like to compare the Islamic perspective with the traditional and contemporary views.

Traditional Belief	Modern Christian View	Ahmadiyya Muslim Belief
Jesus died on the cross, he was buried in a tomb, he was resurrected the third day into a physical body and met with his disciples.	Jesus did not die on the cross; he became unconscious and was mistaken for being dead. Dr. Nicodemus along with Joseph of Aramithea treated him. He became conscious and walked out of the tomb and met with his disciples and ensured them that he was the same man Jesus, not a spirit or ghost.	Jesus was saved by God from the death on the Cross. He fainted and was thought to be dead. Later he received treatment for his wounds; he survived and regained his consciousness. He came out of the tomb and met with his disciples. He ate with them and ensured them that he is the same physical person they knew as Jesus. Jesus then took a Journey in search of the lost tribes of Israel and settled In Kashmir, India.

End Notes

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The Ascension of Jesus

The traditional Christian belief states that Jesus, after being resurrected physically, ascended to heaven in his physical body and is seated on the right hand of God. This view has been questioned not only by most rationalists, but also Christian scholars and theologians. They consider Jesus' resurrection to have been a spiritual rather than physical exaltation. They argue that physical ascension defies logic and commonsense and serves no purpose even if it is accepted in a literal sense. None of the four Gospels mention bodily ascension. Mathew, Luke, and John have not included Ascension in their records. Only the added material in Mark mentions it, and this mention is itself dubious. The only record we find is in the Acts of Apostles (1:1-11), written in the second century A.D. The bodily ascension of few other individuals has been recorded in the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Elijah and Enoch). Luke essentially equated Jesus' ascension to these biblical figures. Exaggerated phrases of veneration, in the paganistic culture of that time, were of normal usage, even in reference to other great figures such as Hercules and Alexander the Great. To take such phrases today in literal form appears baseless. In this chapter, we will present the traditional belief surrounding the ascension of Jesus as well as the beliefs of modern Christian scholars. We will then present the Ahmadiyya Muslim belief concerning ascension and finally compare them. A brief comparison of all three views will be presented in a chart form at the end.

Traditional Belief:

After Jesus was resurrected from death, he physically ascended to heaven and is seated on the right hand of God.

Contemporary Christian Views:

The bodily ascension of Jesus is simply an exaggeration and must be understood in its metaphoric connotation.

In the following, views of a few renowned scholars are presented on this subject.

Hans Kung, in his book On Being a Christian writes as follows:

“In the earliest stage of the Church there was no tradition of a visible ascension of Jesus in sight of the disciples. But there is one exception. Luke is more interested than others from the start in demonstrating the corporeal reality of the risen Jesus and in the apostles as eyewitnesses: unlike the other witnesses, he separates resurrection and exaltation in time. He alone mentions a separate ascension in Bethany, which closes the time of Jesus’ appearances on earth (before the heavenly appearances to Paul) and definitely opens the period of the Church’s world mission lasting until Jesus’ second coming. This is particularly clear in the Acts of Apostles which follows on Luke’s Gospel (after 70) and was probably first written between 80 and 90. In the conclusion added subsequently to Mark stemming from the second century, this idea of a separate ascension was adopted, under the influence both of the phraseology about sitting on the right hand of the Father.

Obviously Jesus did not go on a journey into the space. In which direction would he have ascended, at what speed, and how long would it have taken? Ascension in these terms is inconceivable to modern man, but it was familiar enough to people at that time. We hear of an ascension, not only in connection with the Elijah and Enoch in the Old Testament, but also with other great figures of antiquity like Hercules, Empedocles, Romulus, Alexander the Great and Apollonius of Tyana. It was a question of being carried up, not of a ‘journey to heaven’, neither the way to heaven nor the arrival there being described, but only the disappearance from earth. In this respect the cloud signifies both the closeness and the unapproachability of God. The taking up pattern was therefore at Luke’s disposal as ideal type of narrative form.

Presumably he himself turned the traditional exaltation statement into a taking up story, for which all the structural elements were available in the earlier stories of the tomb and appearances. Why? Luke was not probably concerned only with visualizing the statement of a non-visual exaltation. As in his whole Gospel, he was determined to

correct quite firmly the still widespread expectation of the parousia, the second coming of Jesus, at an early date: instead of inactive waiting, there had to be the mission to the world. Jesus himself had gone to heaven and left the task to his disciples. It was the Holy Spirit, who was now to come to equip the disciples for the imminent missionary age—the time of the Church in continuity with the time of Jesus—until at the end of time Jesus will return as palpably as before... So the story of ascension—especially in the subsequent versions of Acts, with the cloud and angels— seems almost like a parousia story in reverse.”¹

Paul C. Papas, in Tomb of Jesus in India, writes:

“The story of Jesus’ body ascension to heaven is not taken seriously by most scholars. None of the evangelists mention the ascension, Matthew and John say nothing about it. Matthew (28:16-20) has the disciples meeting Jesus at a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus commands them to make all nations his disciples and assures them that he will be with them till the end of time, and nothing further. John only records of an ascension. Mark alone writes of an ascension, but only in later addition. (16:9-20), which is out of text and questionable, as already mentioned... The Acts of Apostles (1:1-11), which is traditionally attributed to Luke and was written about the early second century A.D., does record that Jesus, after conversing with the disciples on the hill called Olivet near Jerusalem, ‘was lifted up, and a cloud removed him from their sight.’ And, as the disciples were intensely gazing up, two men in white stood beside them and told them that Jesus would return in the same way. The story of the ascension, therefore, was obviously a later story of the Christian tradition, perhaps inspired by the story of the ascension of the prophet Elijah; and what happened to Jesus after his crucifixion alive or dead is one of the great mysteries.”²

General Muslim Perspective:

Christianity is not the only religion that is wandering in a literal mirage; Islamic clergy, too, believe in the physical ascension of Jesus by literalizing Qur'anic verses. The following presents a verse of the Holy Qur'an that many Muslim scholars have interpreted literally and, in the process, essentially adopted the Christian doctrine of ascension

“And their saying, ‘We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; whereas they slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it; they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty. On the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself. And Allah is mighty Wise.’” (Qur'an, 4:158-159)

In this verse the Arabic phrase “*bar-rafa‘ahullāhu ilaihi*” has been literally translated to mean Allah took him (Jesus) towards Himself. But at all other places in the Qur'an, the phrase is used to convey the spiritual exaltation of one to God. Interestingly, the literal meaning mirrors the Christian interpretation of Jesus' ascension.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Belief

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in his book *Izala Auham* (Removal of Doubts) presented thirty verses of the Holy Qur'an to prove that Jesus survived crucifixion and went in search of the lost tribes of Israel. In his writings, *Hadhrat* Ahmad explained the use of the above Arabic phrase in the metaphoric sense by quoting several other verses of the Holy Qur'an as examples. As we have mentioned earlier, *Hadhrat* Ahmad's followers believe that Jesus survived crucifixion. He fainted on the cross, and when he was brought down, he was treated by the experienced physician Nicodemus with Joseph of Arimathea, who immediately attended to him. Jesus regained consciousness and came out of the tomb, met with his disciples, and secretly went in search of the lost tribes of Israel. Allah exalted Jesus by saving him from the accursed death that was planned by the Jews, who wanted to prove that Jesus was not the true Prophet of God. Jesus traveled northeast towards India and came to Kashmir, where some of the lost tribes of Israel were located. Here he lived to the age of 120 years and was buried in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Summary of Different Beliefs About Jesus' Ascension

Traditional Christian Belief	Contemporary Christian View	General Islamic Belief	Ahmadiyya Muslim Belief
Jesus died on the cross; he was buried; on the third day he was resurrected and bodily ascended to heaven; he is seated on the right hand of God.	Jesus had no bodily ascension. This belief was added later in the second century. Jesus was exalted by God; he survived crucifixion and traveled in search of the lost tribes of Israel.	Jesus did not die on the cross; some one else died on the cross in place of Jesus. Jesus ascended to heaven with his physical body, is still alive in heaven, and will come back at a later date.	Jesus survived crucifixion; he was treated by the physician; he regained consciousness and met with his disciples; he traveled north east to India in search of the lost tribes of Israel; he died at the age of 120; his tomb is located in Srinagar, Kashmir, India.

END NOTES

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2. Paul C. Pappas, *Tomb of Jesus in India* (Asian Humanities Press, 1991), p.48.
3. Holy Qur'an 4:158-159.

Conclusion

In the last few chapters, I have attempted to survey the metaphoric thrust of basic Christian doctrines in an effort to identify precisely what it is about Jesus' teachings that we should emulate. Thus, when Jesus says that he is "the son of God," does he mean for his followers to take him as the literal son of God, or does he endeavor to show how he is a beloved of God and how his followers, too, might become beloved of God? I argue that the latter, metaphoric reading is a more plausible interpretation because it elevates Jesus' message as being one that motivates others to achieve higher levels of spirituality by emulating Jesus' own example. The former, literal reading would foreclose the possibility of Jesus' followers becoming God's beloved through their own acts; they could only become as such if they had a biological relationship with God, which would be an absurd condition to require.

When we take literalism out of basic Christian doctrines, we discover a distilled wisdom that is no different than that of the Ahmadiyya Muslim perspective on Jesus. Metaphoric interpretive skill could thus possibly coincide the beliefs of Christians and at least one group of Muslims. The reader should note that I have restricted my references to those of modern scholars of Christianity who agree with the interpretations I have outlined. There exist, however, a myriad of scholars who hold traditional views, but who I have not made reference to in my work. I deliberately chose not to in an effort to suggest new interpretations of Christianity that might bode well for the future reconciliation of some Christian and Islamic thought.

To summarize, I have surveyed the following contemporary views of basic Christian doctrines that bear resemblance to the teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in his book *Jesus in India*:

1. Jesus is the spiritual "Son of God," an expression denoting Jesus' closeness to God rather than an ontological relationship with Him.
2. The concept of "original sin" was erroneously formulated in the fifth century by a Biblical interpretation that ignored context.
3. Jesus survived the crucifixion. He became unconscious and was considered dead. Jesus was treated for his wounds by Nicodemus while he was in the sepulcher. Jesus regained his consciousness and met with his disciples.

4. The resurrection of Jesus was more a resuscitation of the same body.
5. There was no physical ascension to the heavens. Ascension is a reference to elevation in spiritual ranks.

Jesus spoke in parables, similes, and figurative language to impart his wisdom. It behooves all who seek to benefit from this wisdom to study the Bible and to reflect upon the deeper meanings latent in Jesus' teachings—meanings based upon metaphoric and not literal sense wherever figurative language has been used in the Scriptures, Bible or the Holy Qur'an.

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— Anwer Khan

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in The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

by *Hadrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (peace be upon him)

The initiate shall solemnly promise:

I. That he/she shall abstain from *Shirk* (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.

II. That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they may be.

III. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajjud (pre-dawn supererogatory Prayers) and invoking *Dar'id* (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.

IV. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.

V. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trials; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.

VI. That he/she shall refrain from following un-Islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Qur'an; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) the guiding principles in every walk of his/her life.

VII. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.

VIII. That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.

IX. That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.

X. That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allah, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connection demanding devoted dutifulness.

(Translated from *Ishtihār Takmil-i-Tabligh*, January 12, 1889)

مسلم سنرائز

“Remember, that no one will descend from heaven. All our opponents who are alive today will die and no one will see Jesus Son of Mary descending from heaven. Then their next generation will pass away and no one of them will see this spectacle. Then generation next after that will pass away without seeing the Son of Mary descending from heaven. Then God will make them anxious that though the time of the supremacy of the cross had passed away and the world had undergone great changes, yet the son of Mary has not descended from heaven. Then the wise people will suddenly discard this belief. The third century after today will not yet have come to a close when those who hold this belief, whether Muslims or Christians, will lose all hope and will give up this belief in disgust. There will then be one religion that will prevail in the world and only one leader. I have come only to sow the seed, which has been sown by my hand. Now it will sprout and grow and flourish, and no one can arrest its growth.”

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him),

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